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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Alexander De Pompa & Lorna Antoniazzi	5	LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR
		FICTION
Lawrence Stewen	7	“The Man Who Killed Coen”
Felix Beaudry	10	“Black Hole Phoenix”
Ben Ghan	12	“The Martian Moustache”
Martyna Cwiek	16	“The Butterfly Effect”
Christopher Geary	18	“The Bells”
Eleanor Crook	22	“The Boy Who Became a Tree”
		POETRY
Margaryta Golovchenko	25	“Pantone 17-3920: English Manor”
Margaryta Golovchenko	26	“The Bagel Guillotine”
Erin Tobin	27	“Left Behind - A Photograph”
Nuard Tadevosyan	28	“Winged Victories”
		GRAPHIC FICTION
Amy Wang & Sarah Crawley	30	“View”
		NONFICTION
Benson Cheung	37	“The Alchemy of Folklore: How the Bohemians Animated the Golem of Prague”
Emily Deibert	40	“Exploring Communal Traumas and Modes of Healing in Emily St. John Mandel’s <i>Station Eleven</i> ”
	42	BIOGRAPHIES
	44	HOW TO GET INVOLVED



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AND THE CREATIVE DIRECTOR

ALEXANDER DE POMPA | LORNA ANTONIAZZI

CREATING AN ANTHOLOGY that aims to explore and perhaps offer up a definition of the “Canadian speculative” seems to be a doomed project from the start. “Canadian” and “speculative” are slippery, amorphous terms on their own, but together they threaten to dissolve into irredeemable ambiguity. “Canadian” identity is often imagined through the metaphor of the mosaic, which evokes an abstract, tenuous overarching unity among a series of disparate elements. “Speculative” is a similarly capacious word, denoting anything that resists realism to instead insist upon the fantastic, the imaginary, and the unreal. With both of these words so gleefully opaque, how can any stable or coherent meaning or definition of the “Canadian speculative” possibly be achieved?

The answer to this conundrum is, of course, to revel in the ambiguity—to take refuge in the marvelous limitlessness of this creative space. Our goal with this project has therefore been not to try to tell a singular national story, but to provide a platform for emerging Canadian—or international students attending school in Canada—writers and artists to tell their individual stories. We wanted them to pursue their idiosyncrasies, to exorcise the ghosts that haunt them, and to share with us their moments of exuberance and sorrow. In allowing our writers and artists this freedom, we hoped to avoid the trap of falling into a reductive understanding of Canadian

speculative fiction. This project is meant to start a conversation, not to serve as the final word on the Canadian speculative. There are still many stories left to tell; many stories not included in these pages.

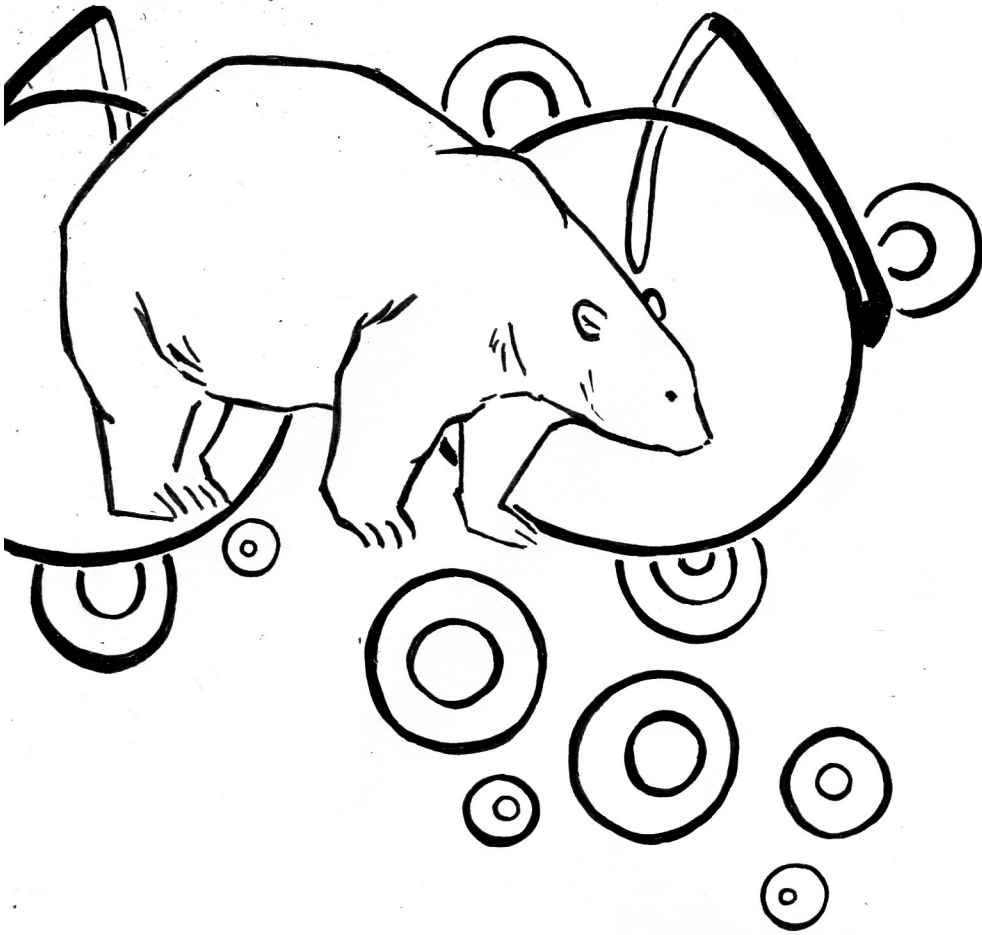
Unsurprisingly, however, a number of key themes and preoccupations emerged throughout many of the works in this volume. These stories, poems, essays, and comics grapple with nature—as a terrifying source of power and as a site of serenity and comfort. They explore the devastation wrought by industrialization and colonization, and examine the pervasiveness of loss caused by the eradication of one’s culture and heritage. With great empathy and wisdom, they trace the recovery from trauma, the potentialities of the future, and the pain of losing one’s beloved. The works in this volume are fundamentally concerned with mythologies—with the transformation of the mundane into the mythic and the mythic into the mundane. They explore the (dis)empowering aspects of myth: how myths can function as socially imposed hierarchies and narratives that demarcate deviancy and normalcy, as well as how they can provide the foundation for the redemptive and liberating process of self-mythologization as a means of reclaiming agency.

The cover of and illustrations in this magazine all seek to represent connectedness. We wanted to examine this idea of interrelatedness through the play between data and bodies—what possibilities

are opened up and denied through the categorization and delineation of the self. Art is a mirror and a window: it allows us to see ourselves and others more clearly. It is, fundamentally, a means of facilitating connection. When we create art, we must make ourselves vulnerable and hope that those whom we invite into our little worlds will tread lightly. When we engage with someone’s art, we must gracefully accept the differences between our contexts in order to empathize with them. Art is about respect, trust, and faith. We must respect the vision and experiences of the artist; we must trust that they are leading us to their innermost selves; and we must have faith that if we sit quietly and allow ourselves to be fully present with the view, that we’ll be witnesses to wonder and magic.

Even among all of the wildly different themes present in this volume, what is constant is the vibrancy of the imaginations of our writers and artists, and their tireless and relentless pursuit of truth through the fantastical. We are honoured to be able to provide a space for so many brilliant individuals to pursue the issues that matter most to them through the speculative, and we hope that the world of the Canadian speculative remains boundless, inclusive, and sublime.

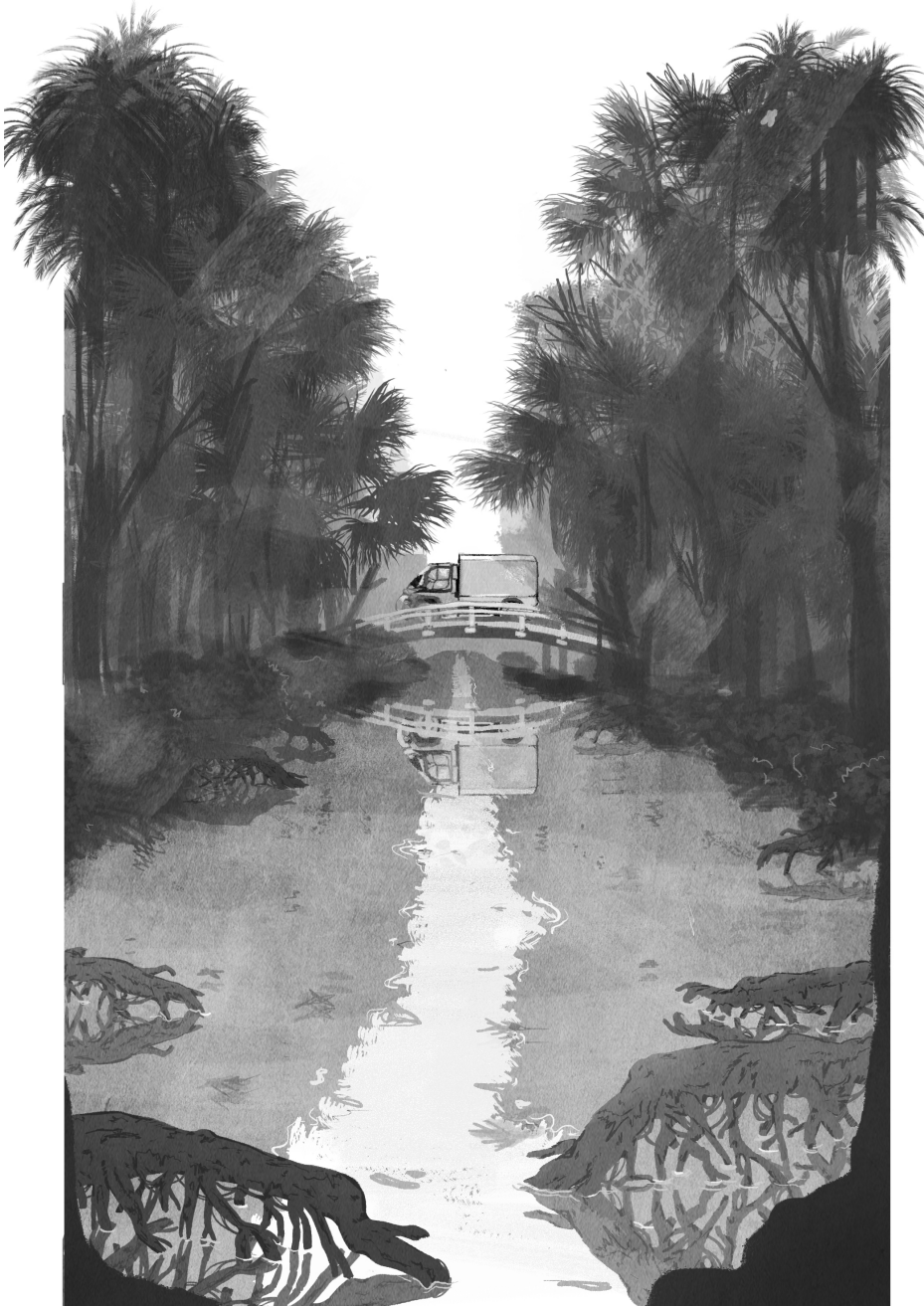
FICTION



THE MAN WHO KILLED COEN

BY LAWRENCE STEWEN

Ed. Lara Thompson | Asst. Ed. Victoria Liao



ILLUSTRATED BY LORNA ANTONIAZZI

COME NOW, *anak-anak*. Gather close and listen.

I know you've come to hear tales of fiery men who fly *garuda* through the eye of a typhoon, or of *naga* who rise from the sea to swallow the moon.

Yet this is a story set not long ago or far away, but right here and right now.

Listen closely, for there are cracks in my story. Cracks where the black magic seeps through.

Do not fall in the cracks, *anak-anak*.

Do not seek the man who killed Coen

I lived alone in my workshop near a village, in the heart of the jungle. Once, the villagers came to me and I hammered tin slates for their roofs, smelted steel parts for their scooters, and beat copper for their *rebab* so that even the old gods in the trees slumbered to their sweet song. In turn, they paid me with money and with talk from the village. For a while, I knew who was chief among the elders, what the *dukun* advised for forlorn lovers, the name of the latest newborn, what *hantu* haunted the jungle, what trinkets I needed to avoid them, the newest phones the youngsters brought back when they returned from the city, and the ones who were exiled.

Then one day, a road was carved through the earth by yellow machines driven by young men who could not stop smoking. I remember watching them as I curved a fish hook. They were distant, but I could see their shapes through the leaves; iron teeth chewed the earth, dried lips breathed fire.

The first van came when the road was finished. It brought the village everything I could already make, sold it for less, and then drove away to the next village, full of money and nothing else.

Every week a van would come.

Every week I saw fewer villagers.

My tongs lost their warmth and became stiff while bird-shit coated my anvil.

I no longer bothered to make the long trek to the bus station where I picked up my ores, my coal, my ardour.

At times when the night was black and moonless, when the tapirs roamed the lightless village following the sweet stench of garbage, when the screams of a *penanggal* smothered any curious minds, I would kindle a little flame in my furnace and beat a lump of bronze with my smallest hammer until the dawn found me, grey-haired and red-eyed.

It was on one such night that I saw him approach.

He emerged from the foliage with nothing but his muddy shorts and sandals. His body was pale amber, with prominent ribs like a horrendous maw closing around his *sarung*.

I thought him *hantu*, but the holy trinkets I was given by the villagers had long since lost their power. I pushed over my anvil and opened the iron box beneath.

"*Bapak*, forgive me, it is I—Arief," he said.

I shut the box, replaced the anvil.

"Arief—Fauzi's son, am I correct?"

"Not anymore, *bapak*."

We shared a meal of rice and dried fish. At first he ate timidly, but the way his eyes watched the steam from the pot, the concave arch of his sunken belly, the layer of grime over his scratched and stung skin—this all spoke of days wandering the jungle with only mosquitoes for company and grubs for nourishment.

I told him to have as much as he wanted, and he shovelled handfuls of food into his drooling mouth.

After he licked his *pincuk* clean, we sat in silence, listening to the fading flames of my furnace. Then he spoke.

"*Bapak*, I need you to make me a weapon."

A juvenile monitor lizard scampered through a pile of dead leaves, and the music of the insects stopped.

"I will not help you begin a feud, boy. You can take some food, a shirt, and some money for the bus. Then you leave at sunrise. That is all."

"No, *bapak*, I swear by Allah's might that I intend no harm for my family or those who chased me from the village. I need a weapon to kill Coen."

The lizard snapped at a pale, formless thing tangled in the bushes.

"Boy, I've forged *parang* that have cut branches from the jungle's first trees and *keris* sharp enough for a man to shave. But even I doubt I could make a weapon that would puncture old Coen's granite hide. And even if I could, where is the great hunter who would wield it?"

The hands that gripped my shoulders held on like the talons of a *pontianak*. Arief's eyes were sunken and hollow, but they held a soul that rivalled star-fire.

"Listen, old man. Three days ago my mother tied my hands behind my back while I slept, and my father dragged me to the

elders' hut. There I saw Rafi, whose face had been torn and beaten by his grandfather's bamboo cane. I would have held him; I would have kissed him, but I was scared to even look at him, because the elders said that if I did so I could expect the same. There, my father proclaimed that I was no longer his son. There, the elders agreed that we were no longer welcome in the village. All this because a young girl saw us holding hands by the river. We were led to the village edge, at the jungle's mouth, where my friends and my cousins waited, boys who we played football with and who laughed with us under the swollen moon with smuggled rum. There, they held your *parang* and your *keris* and chased us into the jungle until our feet collapsed from under us because of the thorns and twigs that stuck through our soles. But even so, I was okay because I had Rafi and he had me, and on the second day we joked and smiled while we washed our wounds. We talked about finding work as sailors and visiting Singapore or Thailand where no one would glance our way. I did not see..."

He broke off as tears etched his features. His grip slackened, then he let go. He held himself now, curled up and shaking.

"I did not see... did not... there was nothing left of Rafi—"

I clutched his head to my chest as he broke.

"We shouldn't have... shouldn't have slept by the water."

His sobs ruptured the night's silent skin. My scarred hands have handled molten steel and fiery embers, yet they felt useless against his cold, shaking back.

I held him until we inhaled the smoke of the dead fire and heard the insects resume their music. The lizard waddled back into the dark, a plastic bag caught in its teeth.

We were deep into the night. My furnace kept us awake with its heat, like that of a fallen sun, and my hammer, engraved with my father-in-law's blessing, tamed the glowing steel.

Was it the steel that would kill Coen? I admired Arief's confidence, but young men are fickle fires, and even the brightest may be blown out by a puff of wind. Even as my sweat mingled with the metal, I could not banish the thought that another morsel was throwing itself into Coen's waiting jaws.

Coen? An old name, a foreign name. A name that came from across the sea on ships bearing guns to erase us, clothes to constrain us, and a language to silence us. If you asked

the village elders what they remember from that faded era, they would tell you how they were reduced to servitude, and how they were displaced within their own lands to practice customs not their own. But there would be gaps in those tales where the events are not so clear, a blurring where the shadows slip through, where reality distorts and bends. Ask anyone else and they will either recite paragraphs memorized from history books at school or just smile and shake their heads.

"Sorry, *mas*."

But these are not events to be passed through the mind and then fed to the past's hungry shadow. They are ripples from a distant time. They are rituals that call him from the jungle's depths, and give him an appetite for toxic waste and human flesh.

The villagers named him Coen. They said he was once a gnarled, old white man who combined the stolen arts of dead *dukun* with the worship of the cannibalistic *Yesus Kristus*, and took the form of a great reptile to torment his *pribumi* slaves. Others even said that Coen is older than this—the result of *Setan* walking the earth on the night of an eclipse and mating with a Jurassic abomination half-fossilized in the womb of a volcano.

But I will say that Coen is neither of these things. Coen is what slipped through the wrinkle of our history: he arrived when the yellow machines carved the village roads; he came with the silver vans full of empty wares; he appeared with the electronic devices that children hold with hands too old; he emerged with the empty hovels where the ghosts of craftsmen stand, as their bodies are replaced by distant factories churning out more things than any two hands could ever put together.

The red spearhead screamed inside the bucket of cold water. Metallic steam clouded my vision and filled my lungs.

"*Bapak*, what are these? I thought you were keeping a gun here."

Arief squatted beside the hole beneath my anvil. The iron box was open, and in his hands he held a bronze figure. It caught the sparks that flew from the flame.

I laid down the spearhead and knelt beside him.

"Who are they, *bapak*?"

I reached for the box and picked up an idol of a woman. As I traced the fine details of her hair and face, my callouses met the waves of her dress, the curves of her body.

"This one was my wife. We stayed in the village once, together. She left me when I refused to move to the city."

I put her back, and one by one I examined each of the bronze figures I had created in my nights of solitude. My father-in-law, who taught me how to wield a hammer; my parents long passed; the villagers who once frequented my workshop; even some of the young men who dug the road and never came back.

Arief nodded as I put them away, his eyes vacant.

"*Bapak*, why didn't you follow your wife?"

I opened my mouth, but my reasons and my excuses formed into an iron ball in my throat. I swallowed the ball and muttered something about how he should sleep. He didn't ask again.

I continued to work on the spearhead, though it was already sharp enough to puncture three layers of hard leather. I brought it to the grindstone. It needed to puncture the hide of Coen.

The sparks flew skyward, returning to the stars.

The sky was white on the morning she left.

I saw her walk out the door in a dream, heard it close like an eyelid: swift, quiet, blinding.

Our television droned: a colourless cathedral filled with a crowd of people, their faces a blurred mass of pixels.

She took the bus at noon. She could hear the roar of the city from the bus stop. It was guttural and low, the moans of an animal in labour.

The bus was empty and the driver was a computer terminal.

"Ticket?" the driver purred, its screen struggling to form a human smile.

There was a television on the bus; she stared at it and refused to look out the windows.

I was on the television, still sleeping in our bed.

My face was missing.

The sky was white on the morning she left.

I turned it black when I burned our house down.

We left before the birds broke the dawn's silence, while the scent of frangipani still lingered between the trees.

Arief led the way, the glittering spearhead fixed to a teak branch that glowed red in the patches of frail sunlight.

I brought my skinning knife with me. Arief did not question why I took the blade, and his bloodless face mirrored my own: the

masks of dancers on death's sharp teeth.

The twigs beneath our feet echoed like cracking ribs in the green maze. As the hours went by, the sun told me we were running out of time.

We did not want to catch Coen wide awake—and hungry.

The trees vanished as we stepped into a clearing. The barren expanse stretched for kilometres until the distant edge where the jungle returned, a dark line against the horizon.

It was a vast scar, the remains of an old fire that burned out decades ago when a company from the city deforested the land to build a factory. Somewhere, somehow, they lost their investors and their money. What remained was the plain of dried grass and the stumps of trees scattered like small burial mounds. The mounds surrounded a malformed skeleton of steel piping. It lay collapsed where the aborted factory was meant to be. In front of its base, a circle of empty machines gathered in a tableau of action as if their operators had jumped off and fled from some unforeseen and terrible force. One excavator still had its teeth sunk in the ground, and the depression had become a pond, home to water insects and tadpoles.

Crushed cigarettes, dusty plastic bottles, a construction helmet, a dried bucket of paint, a woman in a bikini on the cover of a crumpled magazine: the detritus followed us like an old conversation.

We stopped walking when we saw the pit.

Lined with concrete, cracked and broken, the pit's use, like its creators, was forgotten. I could only guess that it was a site to dump industrial waste.

The dry inner walls were scrawled with long, jagged scratch marks. Black water, still as tar, gathered like shadows far below the rim. Rusted barrels floated in the mire with a buoyancy so still they seemed static. Along with the barrels bobbed an old rectangular slab of corrugated tin plate. The plate blinked.

Ripples formed on the water, like muscles tensing beneath skin.

Arief stepped onto the pit's crude inner platform, a thin corroded ring that lined the rim. The platform creaked under his weight, bent inward towards the filth. He kept the spear raised, its tip angled to pierce.

A flash of teeth, a surge of dirty water, a pale grey blur covered in scales. Coen slammed onto the platform, and his weight caused it to snap as he dragged the ruined metal into the water.

Arief jumped back to the grass, made jabbing motions with his spear, and yelled as a shade passed over his calm features.

Coen lunged halfway out of the pit, his claws scrambling to get a hold of the dirt, his jaws gaping.

The spear flicked and thick blood oozed from the creature's tongue. A reptilian hiss reverberated through my bones.

The spear plunged—it slid through scales, then struck again, twisted—and opened a hole in Coen's belly. Soon enough a puddle of brackish blood formed under Coen, who flailed and snapped. The hiss that once shook me was now pitiful and soft, the wheezing of a balloon as the air is squeezed out.

After Coen stopped moving we waited a while, listening to our breathing and the thrum of adrenaline in our hearts.

In his stillness, the blur that obscured his appearance was unveiled. Coen's snout was deformed, the upper jaw bent to the right while the lower jaw bent left. Tumours and lumps were scattered along his oversized body, nodules of overgrown bone poked from his ribcage. Then we saw his left leg, a shrivelled, atrophied thing. It was strangled above the foot by a length of barbed wire that disappeared down the pit and into the water.

"Cut him open, *bapak*. I must know." Arief's voice contained no room for negotiations.

I bent over the pit and nearly dropped my knife as my eyes were flooded with the chemical reek. I sawed at the bit of wire until it snapped, then together we dragged the enormous reptile completely onto the matted grass.

We turned Coen over and I cut just below the ribs, sawing until I reached his pelvis. A repugnant odour gushed from the incision. It smelled like a garbage dump. Several times, my knife hit something solid inside Coen, but despite this and the smell, I carried on until the creature's organs were splayed beneath the midday sun.

The flies gathered like an afterthought.

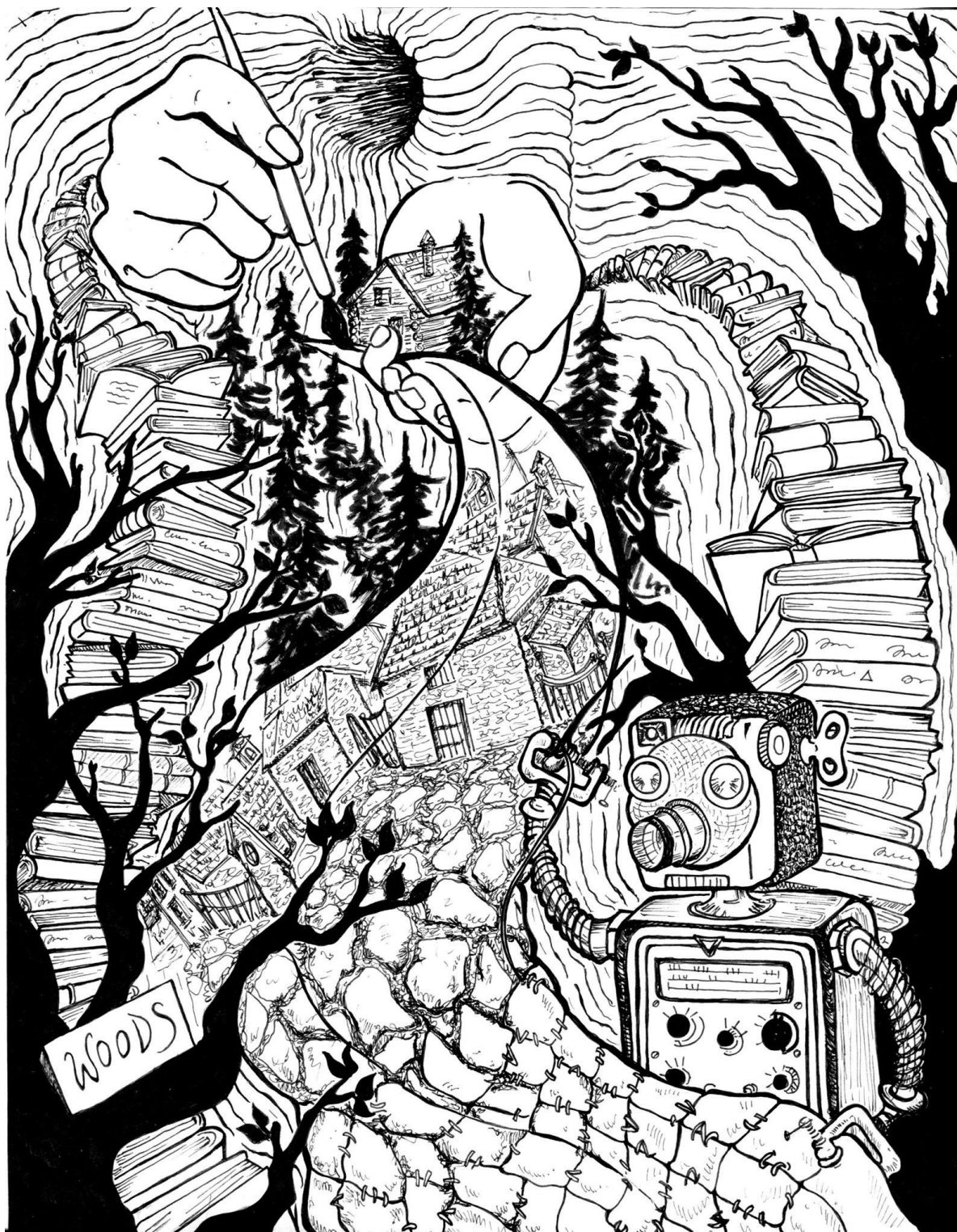
Coen's insides were filled with gears, cogs, pistons, old batteries, wires, scrap metal, and a transparent liquid that shone rainbow hues at a certain angle.

There was no sign of anything that could have possibly been alive.

BLACK HOLE PHOENIX

BY FELIX BEAUDRY

Ed. Victoria Liao | Asst. Ed. Amy Wang



ILLUSTRATED BY AMY WANG

I WALKED INTO THE VILLAGE from the forest. The cobblestone streets were unfamiliar, but they were steady and sturdy. I knocked at his door and the Old Man answered. Come in. What do you think of the village? It is nice, isn't it? Sit down. You can stay a while, he said, probably. He made me feel welcome.

I did not know what he was saying; I still struggled with the concept of *words*. His tones were strange, but their sounds grounded me: their structure and order fit well with his town.

Words. *Words*. What is that you are doing with your mouth? *What is that you are doing with your mouth?* I asked. *Speaking*, he answered. *Ah!* Speaking, but I did not really understand.

I went to work and made a robot. It opened its eyes. *He will be useful around the house*, said the Old Man. Robot pounded away at the table; it was already trying to split atoms with a hammer.

When the day wore on and started to dim, the Old Man set to work on the household. *Fetch us something with which to light a fire so we can stay warm tonight*, he told me.

I felt ready to return to the forest; I did not quite understand the purpose of living in the village. I walked out the door of the Old Man's house. There was a sign that said *woods*; I followed its direction until I came to a *woods*. It was more of a thicket. I walked around—books lay everywhere. Books grew out of the ground atop each other into imposing columns, and in complete and dismal Dewey disorder. They spread through the forest and up the side of a mountain.

I followed the trail of books until I came to a house. It was a modest cabin. Inside, I found a lumberjack named Diophantine. She welcomed me by taking off my pants, without a word. We made love. Her penis was beautiful.

But I was not yet ready to stay with her. I had just found order, I still needed *speaking*. *Ah!*

When I walked into the Old Man's house, I wore a grin across my face. *You know, I hear Diophantine is a lesbian*, said he. I turned away from him, my grin faded.

I walked up to my room. The house and I did not agree on the meaning of *my room* and I found myself standing in Robot's workshop. There, Robot was sewing two blankets into each other. *Imagine this red one is time and space, and this other blue one is matter and energy; it only matters when you*

can see blue.

Ah! But I did not really understand.

It indicated a dial on the wall and turned it all the way down. The world looked very different. *If I turn down gravity, there is no more size and we can see right into everything at the same time. Turns out that neither blanket is a blanket at all, but just a series of threads.* It made sure to turn the dial back up; all this movement made me nauseous. I ran to the bathroom, but the house disagreed with the meaning of *bathroom* and I found myself on the sidewalk. I walked back to Di's cabin in the woods.

Do you agree that you are a lesbian?

Yes and no. If it suits the old man to call me that, he may identify me as he wants, despite conjuring up images of vaginas being licked by other vaginas, and strap-ons; or of tattoos, a bulging bicep in denim, and a washcloth in my hair. I would rather identify as nothing. Already, since last we met, I am no longer the same Diophantine. I am all the decisions I have made and all the decisions those decisions make about my life. Do not assume you know me if you really want to know me. I have slept with women and with men, but I do not identify as someone who is identified by with whom they sleep.

When I walked into the Old Man's house, he had more news for me. *Did you know Diophantine is a terrorist?* I did not even stop to acknowledge his gossip. He followed me upstairs.

The quilt of Robot filled the room, now. It leaked out the windows and curled in upon itself in every edge and in all corners. Its patterns had grown very intricate, and Robot had lost itself in the ornate designs and reliefs. It was an astounding work.

Robot explained that there was a particular part that was giving it a lot of grief, and—turning down the gravity dial—it showed us *life*. What muddled Robot most were the postulations of the Old Man: *There must be a reason for it! Sure, God is dead! But at least we have adaptation to explain it all!* But Robot did not know where he was going and whether there was even a reason for his going.

I called Di on the telephone. She was painting Robot's quilt, far stretches of which had found its way up the mountain into her cabin. She explained that painting the world gave the art meaning,

and threw the painting into the fireplace. She threw the entire establishment into the fireplace: the village, the old man—everything. But she was not a terrorist.

She shattered her unity, heating her hands until they splintered. Rubbing her shards together until they were sand. And still they were known as Diophantine.

The pieces of Diophantine bonded together, and they were branded Diophantine. The world feared the word *Diophantine*, as she destroyed so many things. The people of the world came crashing down upon her, but the idea of *Diophantine* was so stable that it spread and survived, and every time it spread it was a different idea, a different *Diophantine*, and no single *Di* was a *Di*.

Di burned so bright that their black hole birthed a phoenix, which I followed back into the forest.

THE MARTIAN MOUSTACHE

BY BEN GHAN

Ed. Lara Thompson | Asst. Ed. Rej Ford



ILLUSTRATED BY STEPHANIE GAO

THERE WAS A MAN who lived four hundred and four years and then just went to sleep. He was born Charles Wells in 1997, in Meaford, Ontario on the planet Earth. He would go to sleep as Chuck Lilacs in the year 2401, in Arcadia on the planet Mars. But he was never going to die. Early in his life, Charles Wells was blessed with the gift of idiocy, and so was too stupid and unaware of the universe to be truly taken with how depressing it all was. Chuck Lilacs was burdened with the curse of cleverness.

It had been just over twenty years since the idiot Charles Wells had discovered that he had, in fact, been born on an ancient Martian spaceship. And so it had been about eighteen years since he had decided to tell every person he met that his father must have been an ancient Martian. It had been two weeks since his mother Mary had died of a heart attack.

Mary's funeral was small. It lacked any grandeur or drama. Charles was the only one really there. Philip stood next to him but wasn't quite present. Beside him in the tiny graveyard, Philip was secretly very drunk. Philip was not his only friend, but he was his only real friend. The two worked in the same laboratory. Chuck was the Chief Marketer, and Philip was the Second Inventor—not a very good one. The two had become friends out of a shared love of baseball and a shared sense of loneliness. It was partially Philip's influence that had slowly eroded Charles Wells' idiocy away to make space for the clever Chuck Lilacs.

On the form to purchase his mother's grave plot, Charles had signed his name without noticing how he did it. He signed his name like this:

Chuck Lilacs.

And he would be Chuck Lilacs from then on, all the way to Mars.

After the priest had gone, Chuck leaned down and placed some lilacs, picked from their backyard, over the fresh dirt. When he stood back up, absent Philip patted him on the back. "You gotta just keep on." Philip said the only thing he could find to say. "Keep on, Chuck," he'd say, over and over again.

"Keep on what?" Chuck asked.

"Just... on," Philip said.

Two hundred and ninety years later, after his third wife Madeleine had already been buried in the red grass of Arcadia, Chuck would pat his sixth and youngest son Wolfgang Lilacs on the shoulder. When Wolfgang asked his father what they should

do now, Chuck told him, "Just keep on." That was all Chuck knew to say to his son. "Keep on," he said, over and over again.

Wolfgang, incidentally, was not the father of Ray Lilacs.

Chuck didn't have the idea to never die until another two decades after his mother's death, in the year 2045, eleven years before he would finally be fired from *Cats and Cockatoos for the Future! Inc.*, and eleven years before he would inspire interplanetary travel.

In all those years, Chuck Lilacs continued his job of naming inventions. He was, at this point, far too bright to be employed as an idiot. When Chuck—as Charles—had been hired, it was for his idiocy. Chuck Lilacs had long ago been hired as the Chief Marketer at a private think tank. The name of the laboratory had been chosen by its founder, a Dr. Robert Clarke. He had named it like this:

Cats and Cockatoos for the Future! Inc.

He styled it after his lifelong dream: to create a flying cat with the genes of a cockatoo. Robert Clarke never achieved this goal. He found the cure for asthma instead.

Chuck was hired as the head of the marketing department because *Cats and Cockatoos* had encountered a problem. They could only explain their inventions to people equally as clever as themselves, and so nobody could understand anything they said. So they hired an idiot, in the hopes that he could give their inventions names even other idiots could understand. Here is what the idiot Charles Wells called the world's first robotic nurse:

Nurse Roberta

It was partly this job, which required him to sit and think every day, which helped to transform Charles Wells into Chuck Lilacs. But Chuck knew that nobody had any use for a clever chief of marketing, so he kept his intelligence a secret.

In fact, nobody would ever really notice just how bright Chuck Lilacs was until he first ran for Senator of Arcadia on Mars in the year 2320. Later, when Chuck was crowned the King of Arcadia, people found that they wished Chuck had turned out considerably less clever.

So Chuck was able to keep his job. He kept his house, and he tried to keep Philip Martin as a friend, although the two of them

began to drift apart. Chuck didn't know it, but Philip's alcoholism had begun to consume and isolate him, incapacitating him with an entirely different kind of idiocy than the one Chuck had previously been blessed with.

Chuck lived alone for twenty years after his mother's death, with only Herbert the Spaceman to keep him company at night. When, as a child, he told his mother that he was lonely, it at no point occurred to her that he should meet other children. Instead, she suggested that he give himself an imaginary friend. She told him, as a cruel joke, that when he was lonely, he could play with "Herbert the Spaceman."

And, forever afterwards, when Mary Wells asked her son how he'd spent his day, he would reply, "I practiced piano, watched television, and played with Herbert the Spaceman."

Sometimes, hundreds of years in the future, on Mars, when he returned home from his walks to the tiniest skyscraper left in Arcadia, his grandson Ray, or Ray's husband Kurt, would venture to ask Chuck what he'd been up to that day. Chuck invariably replied, "I played chess with the robot Ursula, watched dominoes fall with Joanna, and played with Herbert the Spaceman."

But this was a lie. Chuck had been unable to imagine his imaginary friend for a long time. The last time he'd seen Herbert the Spaceman was the first day of the Martian genocide.

He kept the house in Meaford just as it had always been, and even kept the lilacs growing in the garden. As Chuck reached his forties, everything in the world seemed to stay still. It wasn't until 2040, five years before he was properly reconciled with Philip Martin, that Chuck would be pulled out of his shell by the chaotic soul of Darla Czerneda.

For nearly five years Chuck would find himself in a tempestuous relationship with Darla Czerneda. Midway through this relationship, which Chuck came to understand had been more a kind of madness than a sort of love, the two were married. Theirs would be the first and briefest of Chuck Lilacs' four marriages.

They would meet in a car crash. Darla rear-ended Chuck at a red light somewhere between Owen Sound and Meaford. When Chuck got out to exchange insurance info with the other driver, Darla leapt out and

kissed him. She told Chuck that she was planning to drive home that night and burn her apartment to the ground, but that by the pure luck of his car being in front of hers, now she wouldn't be able to fulfill her plan. That was a Friday afternoon. Chuck took Darla back to his house that evening, having politely asked her for tea. They didn't leave the house for the rest of the weekend.

Chuck found that he remembered little of this, except that it had been exciting, and that Herbert the Spaceman had disapproved. Actually, Chuck recalled only two specific events from his first marriage. The first thing he remembered was that one night Darla had held his chin between her forefinger and thumb, and told him that he would look like Albert Einstein if he were white.

Hundreds of years in the future, a twelve-year-old Ray Lilacs would ask his grandfather if he thought he resembled anyone else. Old Chuck Lilacs would lean down, with a sly smile on his face. "I look like Albert Einstein if Einstein had been black," he said. Ray didn't know who that was.

The second thing Chuck remembered was the picture of a baseball player named Rollie Fingers, which fell out of an old magazine one night. Darla picked it up and stared at it.

"Who's that?" she asked.

Chuck stared at the photo. A strange, oily-looking man stared back at him. Planted on the man's upper lip like a badge of honour was a big, twisted, black handlebar moustache.

"That's Rollie Fingers," Chuck told her. "He was a major league baseball pitcher in the nineteen-seventies."

"Any good?" Darla asked. When Chuck didn't answer, Darla poked at the big moustache, giggling insipidly. "You ever notice that you never see a man with a handlebar moustache who doesn't look like he's supposed to have a handlebar moustache?"

Chuck raised his eyebrows warily.

"You know," Darla said slyly, "I bet people who have handlebar moustaches always really know what to do with their lives. I bet someone like Rollie Fingers didn't sleepwalk through his life. He woke up and looked in the mirror in the morning and just knew that he should grow a handlebar moustache."

"Like he knew his destiny," Chuck said.

"Exactly," Darla snapped back. "I bet people with handlebar moustaches always know what they're supposed to do with their lives. I bet nobody with a handlebar moustache ever wasted their life."

Chuck just shrugged. He didn't

understand why Darla was being cruel.

That night, when Chuck glanced at Herbert the Spaceman, there was a big, fake black handlebar moustache stuck onto his reflective visor.

This is how Chuck would later describe the next five years of his life: they were exciting, and he remembered little of them. Ironically, Philip Martin would also claim to remember little of those years, although he would describe them as *destitute*.

Chuck knew better by now than to inform people that Herbert the Spaceman had disapproved. Though he still kept his silent companion, Chuck had long since stopped telling other people about his imaginary friend.

Chuck barely remembered deciding to marry Darla, and he barely remembered the wedding itself. He did sharply recall how soft her lips had been against his, and what she tasted like.

During the time when Chuck was married to Darla, he still hadn't decided never to die, so it wasn't a problem in their relationship. But, if Chuck had already been living forever, he wouldn't have comforted Darla the same way he would comfort Madeleine. Instead, he might have told her something more akin to what he told his final wife, Lily Luin: "Don't worry about the future—it doesn't exist."

This was different from what Chuck had told Madeleine, even though in a way it meant the same thing. But it would have had a very different meaning with Darla, as it would with Lily, or with Cherryh.

When Chuck woke up one morning, nearly four and a half years after that first night, to find himself alone in his bed, it felt like he had come up from under water. He walked down the stairs and throughout the house cautiously, as if afraid that at any second, some wild and exhilarating monsters might jump out of the walls to surprise him. He found Darla's note for him in the kitchen, where Herbert the Spaceman sat, arms folded. Chuck stared at the folded piece of paper addressed with the looped scrawl of his name for a while, then gently brushed it into the trash without reading it.

He spent that weekend cleaning his house. He kept finding things that surprised him—a lamp he knew he had purchased but

couldn't convince himself to claim ownership of, a picture, the rocking chair repositioned by the window. He felt as if a stranger had been living in his house, had placed their coat by the door, and had tracked muddy boot prints amongst his possessions.

Chuck cleaned slowly, methodically, and patiently, clearing away all the traces of his life with Darla, as one would after a party, or after a friend came to stay. It was surprisingly easy. By the end of the weekend, as Chuck poured himself a glass of milk in the kitchen, sitting with Herbert who had uncrossed his arms for the first time in years, the house looked exactly as it had five years before. Chuck went out after dinner and bought new lilacs, which he replanted in the garden.

Chuck found, to his surprise, that he wasn't particularly upset by Darla's sudden departure. He wasn't angry, he didn't hate her for leaving, and neither did he miss her. He found, when he furrowed his brow, that he had known little about Darla herself. She had merely been a thing that had happened to him. Nothing more nor less, and that was okay.

The only thing that did, in the end, shock poor Chuck, was the state of his own face in the mirror as he passed by it on his way back to bed. It was the year 2045, and Chuck was forty-eight years old. He noticed for the first time that small grey hairs were growing in the whiskers on his face and on his temples. Chuck wasn't upset by the change in his appearance; he was far too clever for vanity. Instead, he thought of all the years he had wasted as poor, idiotic Charles Wells, and of the five years that had passed by with Darla, which he could only remember as a blur of sound and color. Chuck had only just noticed, without any bravado, that he was quite close to becoming old. Chuck's life had passed him by and he'd barely given a passing request for it to let him catch back up again. Chuck felt for the hair on his lip and, suddenly, vehemently wished that he'd grown a handlebar moustache.

When he went to bed that night, *The Genie Box*, still tucked away beneath his bed, hummed and glowed without his noticing.

By the time Chuck moved to Mars, he had long since stopped caring to look in mirrors. His appearance had long ago stopped changing.

Eventually, people noticed that the elderly resident of Arcadia, who at this time was still married to Madeleine Lilacs with three children of their own, was over three hundred years old. Many just dismissed the claims of his birth as a joke and paid it no

heed. Still others shrank back from him, as though he were possessed or contaminated. Some believed that the combination of Martian and human blood had made him incredibly long-lived. Others believed it was a gift from God.

The one time Philip Martin actually brought one of his own inventions to Chuck, he did so without the knowledge of anybody at the lab. He believed that he had created a machine that could detect and manipulate the presence of the *God Particle*, and that, if used correctly, could grant its user absolute control over the universe for 0.0037 seconds. Neither of them knew if it worked. Chuck had taken it home and hidden it under his bed.

He'd named it *The Genie Box*.

The same night that Chuck had been perturbed by his face in the mirror, far away in front of a different mirror, Philip Martin was also being shocked by the gaunt, deep-set eyes staring back at him from a puffy face.

So when each man went to work that day, for they had somehow both retained their positions at *Cats and Cockatoos*, they were both more aware of the world around them than they had been in years. When Philip went down to collect Chuck's latest name (for a mineral compound that, when inserted rectally, could cure intestinal disease, and which Chuck had labeled *The Bitter Pill*), he found himself looking at his former friend in the eye for the first time in years. Suddenly, Chuck was overwhelmed with a sense of loss.

"Phil?"

Philip Martin seemed almost surprised that they were alone together. "Chuck?"

"I miss you," Chuck said.

They decided that night to pick up their tradition of burgers and shakes after work, a tradition that had fallen by the wayside in the past years.

Across their plate of fries, the two talked. Philip admitted to Chuck that he'd missed him. Chuck told Philip he was sorry he'd let their friendship slip, but Philip only shrugged. "You're here now," he said.

Chuck would repeat almost those exact words over one hundred and sixty years in the future, when his third wife Madeleine was still young. She burst into tears on a holiday in the western Martian Flower towns, before the red planet became a mass graveyard. When Chuck asked her why she was crying, Madeleine said that it dawned on her that one day she would grow old and

die and Chuck would still look exactly as he did now, and she didn't want to have to leave him all alone. "But you're here now," Chuck would say, wrapping his arms around her. "You're here now."

Unlike his affair with Darla Czerneda, Chuck would stay married to Madeleine Lilacs for sixty-two years, and he remembered every second with her.

Philip then asked Chuck what had become of him since they'd drifted apart. Chuck told him that he'd gotten married, and Philip jumped up to congratulate him. But Chuck had already raised his ring-less hand, a shy smile on his face, to tell Philip that it was too late, that it was all over now.

Philip dropped back to his seat, disappointed. He said he was very sorry, but Chuck truthfully admitted that he didn't feel too broken-up about it. When Philip asked if Chuck had loved her, Chuck just shrugged.

They both sat around for a while, appreciating the company of a friend, and then Chuck admitted what he hadn't dared to say out loud since he was a little boy. "I want to go into space," he said.

"What?" asked Philip, his head snapping up.

"Space," Chuck repeated, and suddenly all those memories of his childhood, all those dreams he'd had of the adventures he and Herbert would go on came flooding back. "That's what I should have done with my life; I should have got in a rocket and gone into space."

"Is this because of what your mother said?" Philip asked. "About how you were born?"

There was a pause, and Chuck shook his head. Philip, thinking he'd struck a nerve, would have apologized, but Chuck started up again.

"But the thing is, since she died, I've tried looking myself up, properly looking myself up I mean. Do you know that there isn't any record of me? Not in any hospital, not in any government document, or any file or memory. It's like I really wasn't born on Earth at all."

"You think she was telling the truth?" Philip asked incredulously. "You think you were born on a spaceship?"

Chuck shrugged.

"But Chuck, that's science fiction!"

Chuck raised an eyebrow. "Is it?" he asked. "Yesterday I named a machine that can transport you thirty-two seconds into the past: *The Mayfly Machine*. Isn't that science fiction?"

Philip shrunk in his seat. "*The Mayfly*

Machine also turned all its passengers' brains to soup that poured out their ears," he muttered.

But Chuck ignored him. "I should have believed her," he said wistfully. "That's what I should have tried to do with my life: I should have been trying to figure out where I come from—I should have tried to get to space!"

"I should have invented the cure for cancer," Philip said wistfully. "That's what I should have tried to do with my life."

Chuck shook his head. "I didn't notice I'd turned forty-eight," he said.

"I hadn't noticed that I'd turned fifty-seven," Philip replied.

"We both figured it out too late," Chuck said and slumped back in his seat. Philip mirrored him. Neither of them knew how close Chuck was to causing interplanetary travel. Also, neither of them knew that Philip was wrong about his own destiny. The cure for cancer would be discovered by a young woman in the Philippines named Aldous Dick, in the year 2091. Of course, Philip's eventual destiny would be to cure alcohol addiction.

They both leaned back in their seats, and Chuck fiddled with the straw of his milkshake unhappily.

"Maybe it's like growing a handlebar moustache," Chuck said. "Do you know anyone who has a handlebar moustache?" he asked.

"Not really."

"But have you ever seen anybody with a handlebar moustache?" Philip shrugged. "But have you ever seen anybody who had a handlebar moustache, who you thought shouldn't have grown a handlebar moustache?"

Chuck reached up and softly touched the whiskers of his own moustache, which was trimmed close to his face. He thought maybe now he understood what Darla had meant that one night when she'd teased him about Rollie Fingers. Chuck explained Darla's theory to Philip.

"So people with handlebar moustaches have a better idea of destiny," he said. "Figures."

Philip raised a hand to his face, fingering the smooth, plain skin of his own upper lip. "So it's like that. We were both destined to grow handlebar moustaches and didn't notice till now."

"Exactly," Chuck said. Now that the metaphor had been properly realized he slumped back in his seat, all the excitement gone out of him.

"If we started trying to grow handlebar

moustaches now we'd never finish growing them," Philip said.

"What you and I need is just a little more time," Chuck said.

Philip nodded. He raised his milkshake. "Here's to a bit more time," he said.

"Here's to Rollie Fingers," Chuck replied. Their half-empty glasses clinked together noisily.

They slurped the last of the concoctions down together and left the diner. They hugged and parted ways at their cars. Both were happy that, at least in the middle of everything, they had their friend back. But each was saddened by the conversation they'd shared. They had both become convinced that their destinies were like trains, and each man had forgotten to board. Both of them wished that they'd had a little more time. Neither one knew how much time exactly.

But as it turned out, Philip Martin only needed another thirty-odd years in order to invent *The Intervention*. It would take another one hundred and thirty-three years, and then another four years after that, until Chuck's feet would touch the surface of an alien world.

Chuck spent his long drive home sitting in the driver's seat of a vehicle which floated an inch off the ground. He sat just thinking, thinking about what it would take, how much time he might need to get himself into space. Chuck knew the space program only took young, fit men—of which Chuck was neither. So he would have to wait for commercial space travel.

Chuck was still thinking about it when he went to bed that night. As he laid his head against the soft, cool pillow, alone in his bed for the first time in years, he looked over to the chair by the window, which was where he always imagined Herbert the Spaceman sat staring off into the horizon.

Just then, Chuck Lilacs decided that he had to get his imaginary friend into space. He closed his eyes on that comforting, nonsensical thought, secure in his decision. *I'll never kick the bucket*. He thought to himself and to Herbert. *If that's what it takes to get us up there, pal. I'm never going to kick the bucket*.

Beneath his bed, *The Genie Box*, which had long since sat gathering dust, glowed softly. It flashed and hummed beneath the sleeping man's head, and then with a faint *pop*, it vanished into nothing.

And Chuck Lilacs was never going to die.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

BY MARTYNA CWIEK

Ed. Polina Zak | Asst. Ed. Ben Ghan



ILLUSTRATED BY VERONIKA GARBOWSKA

SOMETIMES I WONDER if I would still be here if human evolution were altered beyond repair. More frequently, I wonder if I am the product of such an alteration—an other version of myself from a parallel world.

The laws of time travel most commonly cited by misguided travellers state that once you have gone to the past, you can never again exist in the future; once you have gone to the future, you cannot mention said future upon your return; and once you are in the stream, you are not to move from the future to the past, as doing so would endanger human evolution, a concept that's been in no danger at all since the year 4018.

Some of these laws I've broken, and some I've made. More than anything else, I question the very existence of these laws. I question their necessity.

The ripple effect—sometimes called the Disambiguation Syndrome, and often referred to in common culture as the Butterfly Effect—states that entering the stream causes an outward surge of reaction that mirrors the ripples of a water droplet falling into a still pool of liquid.

The ripples follow the root and effect rule, causing the initial state to change incrementally.

A butterfly cannot fly after you've touched its wings. I wonder if a butterfly can still change the future even after you've cut off its head.

Where I come from, there is no such thing as time travel.

When I finished writing the Ten Commandments on my iPad17XXL, I engraved them on a stone and left, finding out in due course that this action indirectly led to the deaths of millions, and even more.

How long until I decide that millions weren't enough to save everybody else?

I injected a strain of mad cow disease into a rat that later infected half of Europe's barnyard stock, leading to a worldwide meat recession, an outbreak of pneumonia, the invention of synthetic foods to cure world hunger, and the steady rise of vegetarianism in the most privileged places.

Vegetarianism was found to be the leading cause of cancer in the year 2689.

Time travel laws state that, though you can travel within the stream at will, you need a permit and an official licence from the agency in order to enter the stream. You need a code, you need a pod, and you need the ability to hold your mind in a state of calm as first used by monks in the Alps.

I am the world's greatest assassin.

They say that a person with a degraded

mental state should not man heavy machinery or operate vehicles within twenty miles of a city. Later, the limit is changed to ten miles, then two, and eventually none at all as our collective mental state begins to steadily decline.

I am immortal, because in the year 3509 they discover the cure for old age, the only disease left to mankind.

Formaldehyde is no longer an organic compound where I come from—it's the name of a pop sensation that topped the charts for three straight years, setting the record for "highest number of sighs in a song" twice in a row.

The order of the sighs is like this: ooh, baby, ooh, and ooh, baby. Rinse; repeat.

When I arrived in the time of the Neanderthals, I handed them beef jerky and deodorant and sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" to them as off-key as possible.

Those Neanderthals went on to build the White House, a monument that has since turned a nasty shade of yellowing grey, smelling of the hair products that eventually caused it to explode.

Sometimes I return to my time and fall asleep with the feed turned on, listening to the melodic swearing of the officials on screen. It's always the same lullaby.

They tell each other to fuck cows until the nukes arrive.

Lather, set timer, dry, open oven, rinse, correct hair in a little mirror beside the kitchen door while you wait for your husband to come home from the war.

Who am I waiting for?

Sometime in the year 40X of the imperial line—the time of ocean cities and floating monarchs and deep space exploration—we die.

The ripple effect is a myth designed to stop us from trying to change the destiny of mankind, a destiny set in stone. A destiny from which neither I nor the beginning of time can escape.

I am the world's only living soul.

THE BELLS

BY CHRISTOPHER GEARY

Ed. Lorna Antoniazzi | Asst. Ed. Janice To



ILLUSTRATED BY CAITLIN CHANG

IT WAS COLD WHEN they had first driven out there—cold, but clear and windless. Over the previous weeks, Paul and Catherine had looked at so many houses, had been grandly ushered into so many depressingly small rooms, had balked at the rents even such cosy offerings expected. So they kept looking—farther out and further down from where and how they had lived. They drove out along the highway to another viewing. It was beyond even the most faceless suburbs—a small, sleepy town an hour

and a half from the city. They found the street and slowed to count along the scrunched-up houses that reverently faced an old church. But when they parked and got out, both of them stood by the car, looking up past the bare trees to the bell tower that stood against the clear blue sky. Its bells were chiming out, as if in welcome, and the arms of its clock glowed in the sunlight, clasped in that moment, together. And Catherine and Paul each thought yes—that

Claire set down her pen and sat back. It was the start of something. A ghost story, maybe. Now that the church bells were no longer going to be such a nuisance, she could see their thematic potential. A certain Gothic ring.

Their charm had worn off quickly. After the first few carillons, and some quaintly appreciated knells, the bells had soon become a grating, hourly torture for Claire. Day and night, they took their toll on her nerves. In the weeks since they'd moved in, she'd been unable to get a full night's sleep. Philip and the kids had quickly grown oblivious to them, while Claire had tried earplugs and headphones, refusing to take any sleeping pills. She had looked longingly online at services offering double-glazing.

Finally, she had complained. Officially. From there followed two weeks of very serious cups of tea with the Reverend and some of his most indignant parish dignitaries, as well as two meetings with a scrupulously indifferent representative from the town council. It had all culminated on Wednesday evening, at a community meeting almost no one had attended, following which the council had accepted Claire's complaint and ordered that the bells be stopped that Sunday.

There was to be one last chime at midday. Philip had taken the kids for a walk, and on their way back they were going to watch the workmen decommission the bell tower. Its clock was going to be stopped as well. Claire had stayed home, however, so as not to seem petty in this moment of resounding victory. And, of course, so she could write.

She was working in the kitchen. Every other space in that reverently scrunched-up house was packed with things they'd packed away. Things they couldn't sell, or hadn't had the heart to. Things they'd once kept or envisioned in pride of place, and now had neither place nor pride for. Things they had purchased at nosebleed-inducing prices, and which they were still paying through the nose for in storage costs.

From across the street, the carillon whined its chimes for the final time. There would probably be a small crowd, mostly from the service beforehand, to watch the workmen deactivate the bells. The bell tower's clock was going to be disabled as well. It was all part of the one mechanism. Philip had been against her making the complaint. He'd said it would just antagonize their new neighbours. And she had felt, when out walking with the kids the other day, hostility in certain stares. Perhaps the family would all wake up one morning encased in their suite

of bespoke wicker garden furniture—which was stacked under a tarpaulin that filled half the back yard—to be sacrificially burned to assuage the neighbourhood’s Anglican gods.

She heard the first gong. Yes, they were going. *Gone. Gone. Gone.* For good. *Gone. Gone.* Never coming back. *Gone. Gone.* The Reverend had said he would appeal. *Gone. Gone.* But she’d fight it. *Gone.* And win. *Gone.* Again.

She luxuriated in the silent kitchen, with no other sound now but the dryer contently tumbling upstairs.

She heard the front door open, and Philip say, “Quick, quick, quick.” A set of small feet pounded up the stairs. Jack. Claire leaned back her chair and looked into the hall.

“Hey there,” she said, smiling.

Philip pushed the door closed with his foot while Sophie headed straight into the living room. He looked back at Claire, and then lifted up the plastic bag in his hand. “Lunch?”

Claire cleared away her papers and started making ham and cheese sandwiches. Philip leaned against the sink.

“Maybe about thirty. Not that many,” he said.

“Any burning stares?”

“Well, there were these two golden girls by the church door who gave us the evil eye when Jack cheered after the last gong.”

They heard a flush above them, and then a pounding down the stairs. There had distinctly been no pause in between for handwashing.

Claire laughed. “Way to go, Jack,” she said.

Jack paused at the door to the kitchen. He was six.

“Mom? Can I have peanut butter instead?”

Catherine fell asleep reading over her third draft and dreamt again about their old house—the dream house that had been real and theirs for what seemed just a moment before it had become a curse. A nightmare under so much water they could never bail themselves out. Catherine couldn’t blame him—them, really—for having wanted it so much, for grasping for the highest rung, for over-reaching. In the end, it was just the market, the global downturn, hard luck. But mostly it was—

Gone.

Her pen quivered over the page.

Gone.

No.

Gone.

Claire stood up from the kitchen table.

Gone. Gone.

That bastard.

Gone.

She strode into the hall.

Gone. Gone.

She grabbed her coat from the banister and slung it on.

Gone.

She was going to crucify that curate.

Gone.

The front door slammed.

Gone.

Insofar as he could thunder, the Reverend had done his best at their last summit. When Claire had once again been unmoved by his appeals to the bells’ loveliness and time-honoured time-honouring, the Reverend, still cupping his teacup, had tried to take a stand. His church had stood for one hundred and twenty-seven years, and he would not stand idly by as everything for which it stood—

“More tea, Reverend?”

“Thank you, Mrs. Lyons. Yes, I cannot stand aside as our long-standing traditions—”

“Milk?”

“Yes please. As our upstanding traditions are—”

“Was it one sugar?”

“Oh, no thank you. But I won’t stand for it, Mrs. Lyons. Mmm, that’s lovely.”

“And please do sit, Reverend.”

But now Claire marched across the street, stormed around the back of the church, and hammered on the door of his office.

It opened meekly. “Mrs. Lyons.”

“There was an order, Reverend.”

“Excuse me?” He opened the door wider.

“It’s contempt. Flagrant contempt of local government.”

“Mrs. Lyons, I—”

“Really, I’m astonished. Did you think I wouldn’t hear them?”

“I’m not quite sure what you’re saying.”

“Oh, let’s not. I heard the bells.”

“The bells? Are you alright, Mrs. Lyons?”

He stepped back from the doorway, ushering. “Would you like to come in?”

“No. No, I think I’ll just call the council.”

“But they sided with you. The bells were stopped yesterday. It all was. I mean...” He was shaking his head. Her stare began to melt. “Is this a... Just look at the clock.” He gestured over her shoulder up at the bell tower. Its clock read just after twelve. “It hasn’t moved since yesterday when those fellows from the council disabled the whole mechanism.”

“I... I thought...” her voice trailed off. She had heard it.

“Are you sure you’re quite alright?” he said softly.

She snapped around. “No, I think I’ll just—I’m sorry. I mustn’t be feeling well.”

Walking back to the house, she realized that she had locked herself out.

Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone.

Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone.

On Wednesday afternoon, Claire drove into the city to see her friend Sue in the café of an art gallery. They hugged and got flat whites, at Sue’s behest and treat. She was in a grey pantsuit and looked elliptically slim.

“So, are you going to show the ghost?”

They were sitting on opposing stools at one end of a long steel table.

“I don’t know. I’m not even sure if there’s going to be one. I’ve tried different ways, but they all seem pretty derivative.”

“It *is* a ghost story.”

“Right now, it’s more about trying to write a ghost story.”

“Well, that’s not derivative,” said Sue, sipping.

“I guess. The protagonist is essentially me, as usual. A writer. Married with kids. Money troubles... But as she keeps writing, these things keep happening. It’s like she’s haunting herself. Or the story is.”

Sue licked the foam moustache from her upper lip. “Are you sure that won’t be a bit—much?”

“Maybe. I haven’t worked out the ending yet, but I just don’t think I can do it any other way. I mean, if it’s set in the present day, then I have to be metafictional. Any realistic character is going to remember the horror movies they’ve seen. Though I can’t have her creeping down some creaky hallway, singing the theme song from *Ghostbusters*.”

“Are you going to have her say things like that?”

“Now that would definitely be too much.”

They both sipped their flat whites.

“I don’t know,” said Sue a moment later. “It could work.”

They’d been roommates all throughout college, and for two years after as well, before Claire had moved in with Philip. Back when Sue had done poetry slams, and had enjoyed a figure and an outlook on life that she liked to describe as *cushiony*.

Sue couldn’t stay for long, and when she left for work, Claire walked around the gallery until it closed and then drove home.

The toast peeked up slyly. She shunted up the lever and pinched out both slices onto a plate. The toaster's spring mechanism had been broken since Sophie had tried to make a melted cheese sandwich by herself a few months ago. She had forgotten to peel off the packaging of the pre-sliced cheese Philip always ended up buying. And so, cloyed with an alloy of cheddar and plastic, their top-dollar toaster no longer popped.

She was buttering toast. "What do you guys want on yours? One peanut butter, and—Sophie?"

Claire looked over her shoulder. Jack and Sophie were sitting at the table with their cereal—Jack voraciously shovelling his into his mouth, and Sophie absently stirring hers.

Sophie sighed. "No thanks," she said.

"Marmalade, then." Claire turned around and opened the fridge.

"I don't want any toast. I'm fat." Sophie was nine.

"You're not fat, Sophie." Claire came up again with the marmalade. "You're just the right size for your age."

Clink.

She closed the fridge and turned to the table. Jack and Sophie were both staring down at their cereal, holding their spoons at the edge of their bowls.

Clink.

"Guys?" *Clink.* They were tapping their spoons against their bowls. *Clink.* Chiming, perfectly. *Clink.* "Stop it, guys."

Clink. She strode to the table and put down the marmalade hard. *Clink.*

"Jack! Sophie! Stop it!" *Clink.*

"Stop it! Stop it!" Claire grabbed Sophie's arm, grasping for the spoon.

"Let go of me!"

"Just stop!"

"It's my cereal!"

She let go of Sophie's arm. Sophie pushed back her chair with a screech and barged out of the kitchen. Safe in the hallway, she shouted, "I hate you!"

Claire sank into Sophie's chair, holding her palms against her eyes, breathing.

Crunch.

She looked up. Jack was watching her, munching on a slice of buttered toast. She smiled carefully.

"I'm sorry I was shouting, Jack. I'm not feeling very well."

He crunched again, and then asked, between munches, "Do we still have to go to school then?"

"You look awful, Claire."

"How kind of you to say, Gerry."

They were in his office, sitting in facing armchairs. Gerry was in his fifties, short and a little pot-bellied. His receding hair was going grey around the back and sides, but his beard and eyebrows were still bushily black. She had been going to see him twice a month for almost a year. When the belt-tightening had started about then, she had felt guilty about continuing, but Philip had insisted that she keep going if she wanted to. It was for her health, after all. And it was tax deductible.

Gerry was scribbling a note on his pad. "I really don't like the sound of these auditory hallucinations you've been experiencing."

"I don't either."

"Right, well... Listen, I know you don't want to take any sedatives, but I'm going to prescribe you one. It's a mild one, but it should get you to sleep for a few hours each night. This insomnia could become very serious if we don't do anything."

She studied the densely credentialed wall behind him. "You know, I looked up the longest time a person's ever gone without sleep. The record is just under twelve days. I think they died afterwards, though." She settled her gaze back on him. "Do you think that that should still have counted?"

"One would hope so."

She glanced over to the window, frosted for privacy.

"You still have seven days left."

"What?" she turned.

Gerry looked up from his clipboard. "For the record, I mean. Although I hope that's not what you're planning."

"No. Of course not." Claire paused. "I'm sorry, but can we move on to something else?"

"Sure." Gerry sat back. "We were talking about your writing the last time."

Gone.

"Philip. Philip." She was whisper-shouting, and shaking his shoulder.

"Huh? What time is it?"

"Do you hear them?" *Gone.*

He turned over onto his side. "Who?"

"Please. Just listen."

Philip lifted his head off the pillow. *Gone.*

"There. That's three."

"Do you mean bells?"

"You hear them too?" *Gone.*

"No. Will you just try those sleeping pills already?"

"I just need to know." *Gone.* "It's like they're counting down."

"Can we talk about this later?" *Gone.* "I'm really tired, Claire."

That evening, Claire took her first dose of the sedative.

She was in the kitchen of their old house. She exhaled plumes of steam. At the other end of the kitchen, across the stainless steel surface of the island, there was someone sitting on one of the stools. They were shadowed against the bright, frosted-over windows. She started to approach them round the side. The figure was wearing a bushy fur coat, and their foot was propped on the countertop. They were clipping their toenails. *Clink. Clink. Clink. Clink. Clink.* She tried to tell them to stop, that the clippings were going to go on the floor, but when she tried, it sounded as if she was speaking underwater. The figure looked up, but she couldn't see their face. They slid off the stool and came around the island, leaving the foot behind on the countertop. The figure came closer. They were holding out a hand, the fingers spread, red and dripping. She couldn't move. She screamed in muffled bubbles. Their hand closed around her outstretched neck. She couldn't breathe. She was going to die. She needed air. Air. Air. Air. "Claire!"

The slap knocked her down onto the bed. She opened her eyes, and her cheek began to sting.

"What the fuck!" she yelled, her hand on her cheek.

Philip was sitting up in the bed, massaging his neck. "You're asking what the fuck?" he whispered hoarsely. "Claire, you were choking me."

She—she didn't—she wasn't. "Wait," she whispered, and sat up close to him. "What time is it?"

"What time? Jesus." He pushed her away from him, and swung out of the bed. "I'm going to sleep downstairs."

Gone. Gone. Gone. Gone.

She was sitting in the kitchen, with Philip standing beside her. They were both staring down at the table.

Earlier that morning, when she'd come back from walking the kids to school, she had gone to check the mail. But she had spotted something small and dark wedged behind the mailbox. She'd gotten a twig and pried it out, and it had fallen onto the welcome mat. A little black felt pouch.

Its contents were now spread out on the table. There was a matchbox, which she had peeped open to see what must have been toenail clippings. There was a used tampon,

dried and brownish. There were four small teeth. Baby teeth.

"It's a prank," said Philip. "It's got to be a prank."

She was looking at the teeth. The kids hadn't lost any since they'd moved. "It's a curse. They've cursed us."

"You really think the Reverend and his golden girls have started dabbling in witchcraft?" He stumbled into a chuckle.

"I don't know. But if someone's trying, then we're in danger, right? Even if they're just crazy..." He had said it would turn all the neighbours against them. "Philip, I'm so scared. I'm just so scared."

"It's okay. It's all going to be okay." He knelt and hugged her. "We'll go away," he whispered into her shoulder. "All of us together. We'll take a nice little vacation. This weekend, alright?"

She held herself back from him. "Philip. We need to leave now."

"I can't miss any more work. I already had to skip out early today to come back here."

She gestured at the table. "Do you see this? Philip, the bells are counting down. We need to get away from here."

He leaned back on his heels and looked away. "Claire, they'll fire me. And I can't lose this job. We need... We need to start rebuilding our lives."

"I could take the kids myself, and you could meet us somewhere."

"I... Claire, I don't think you're well enough to... Look, just three more days, okay?"

"It'll be too late!" Her voice was rising.

"Claire," he said, standing up. "We'll just—we'll throw it away."

He reached to sweep all the things on the table into his hand. "Wait!" She grabbed at his arm, and the matchbox fumbled off the edge of the table. The clippings scattered onto the floor.

"Fuck! What is it?"

"It's my brand," she said, pointing at the tampon. "They must have..." Picked through.

Philip took a deep breath. "It's going to be fine, alright? Friday evening, we'll go. You should call Sue and see if we can stay at her cottage."

Gone. Gone.

It was late and Claire was sitting alone at the kitchen table. The day before, she had gotten rid of the bag. Picking up all the clippings she could find, she had put everything back in the pouch, and, out in the

yard, away from all the wicker furniture, had doused it with barbecue starter and set it on fire. The teeth hadn't really burned, but she'd swept up all that was left and then flushed it down the toilet.

Gone.

She glanced up at the microwave's display. 01:00. There was less than a day now.

On the table, all her notes and drafts for the story were spread out. She had thought of burning these as well, but in the end hadn't bothered. She would just leave it unfinished. She knew now what kind of ending it would have to have.

"Claire?" Philip came into the kitchen and she turned back to her pages. He sat down in the chair next to her. "I heard it. There was only one this time but I'm sure I heard it."

She looked up. "How long have you...?"

"I don't know," he said, starting to paw at her notes. "A few days, maybe. I wasn't sure. I thought that you'd just made me paranoid. But you were right." He met her eyes. "We need to leave."

She stood up, silent, and held his head against her, knotting a hand through his matted hair.

"I'm sorry," he whispered.

They packed light for themselves and the kids, as if only for a few days, and loaded up the car. Then, just before dawn, they carried the kids groggily from their beds to the backseat. Sue's cottage was about an hour southwest of the city, but they were driving there from the far side. They hit traffic.

"Why don't we pull in there?" Claire pointed to an upcoming service station. "We can get the kids some breakfast, and I can call Sue." Sophie and Jack were still fast asleep in the back. "I'll tell her we had a gas leak, or something. She won't mind."

Sue didn't mind at all. She was already at work, and so briskly told Claire to be her guest. After she hung up, Claire stood for a moment beside the car. She soaked in the slow swash of the traffic on the highway, and watched her breath steam upward into the clear, cold air, as finally everything was starting to unwind.

Inside the service station, Philip and the kids were already sitting at one of the tables with their food. "Everything okay?" he asked, passing her a coffee.

"Yep. The keys are in the bird-feeder."

"What about school?" Sophie asked, lowering her croissant. Jack shushed her through a mouthful of his breakfast sandwich.

"We're all taking the day off today," Claire

answered. "And we're going to stay in a lovely cottage for the weekend."

"I should call in sick," said Philip. "Before I forget."

"Do you think they'll buy that?"

"I don't know." He swigged his coffee and made to get up.

"Gross!" said Sophie. "Mom, Jack's bleeding."

Jack hadn't noticed as the blood had begun dribbling down from his mouth. "Oh, God. Did you bite your tongue?" Claire grabbed one of the napkins and tilted his head back to wipe his chin.

"Hey, look!" Sophie pointed at Jack's half-eaten sandwich, sitting on its grease-paper wrapping. There, buried in the toasted bun, like a tiny, waiting grave, was a tooth.

THE BOY WHO BECAME A TREE

BY ELEANOR CROOK

Ed. Lara Thompson | Asst. Ed. Stephanie Gao



ILLUSTRATED BY MIA CARNEVAL

2015 – Friday, 3:51pm

IT IS SPRINGTIME, early May. You are Annie Nelson, thirty-two, a businesswoman managing a successful gallery of contemporary art in Chicago, Illinois. You recently closed negotiations for the sale of several new pieces, enough to earn you that trendy new apartment on Lakeshore Drive. You've moved in, but have not unpacked; your living room is a maze of boxes.

You spent the past week making funeral arrangements.

The past few hours were spent on a plane to Peterborough, with a layover in Toronto. Ten minutes before landing, the man sitting next to you spilled coffee down the side of your beige cardigan, and you mopped it up with a handful of airline napkins, accepting his apologies with a grimace.

Now you are in the back of a taxi, your head against the window, being taken out

of town to the manor house. The property is surrounded by new development: construction sites and cookie-cutter suburban houses that make your chest tighten with anxiety. Even now, you have trouble returning here, seeing the encroachment of civilization.

The car turns right onto the gravel path and, in a few seconds, the house comes into view. It is a museum now, open to the public, but you doubt it gets many visitors. It is tired and out of the way, and still surrounded by trees.

2015 – Friday, 4:07pm

You have two missed calls: your mother and your ex-husband. Your mother wants you to come home tonight. You told her before that you would be stopping here first, that you've booked a hotel, and you feel a twinge of annoyance. She wants to know what you will say at the service, her voice uncertain, and she sounds older than she should. You are not looking forward to the reunion, to the press of uncles and cousins and their smiling children.

Luke called to say he would be flying in tomorrow morning, and that he will pick you up before nine at the hotel. You wonder why he still bothers, but he always did get on with your father. Wanted to pay his respects, he said, and you should too.

You turn off your phone and walk up the path, awkward in your high heels. Once you reach the grass beyond the gate you take them off, leaving them behind the fence with your suitcase and your stockings. You curl your toes in the grass and walk around the house, past the edge of the trees and into the woods.

1991 – *The Boy in the Forest*

The summer you turned eight, your parents sent you to live with your great-aunt in her huge house. On arrival, you sat stubbornly with the baggage in the entryway until someone tried to move you. She held out her hands, consoling you when you burst into tears, and didn't try to stop you when you ran up the stairs and hid until dinnertime.

You hated the house, and hated your room. It was old, dusty, and far too big, like a classroom built for one. In defiance, you sat in the closet with the door closed and a flashlight taped to the wall, drawing pictures in a notepad on the floor. You read a summer's worth of books in ten days.

Only then did you venture out, into the garden behind the house. It was vast and beautiful, with cheerful rows of flowers. You skipped gingerly past the gardener and walked right up to the edge of a small forest, peering into a new world.

It was easy to lose yourself between the rows of trees, to linger in the smell of pine sap and sweet summer grass. You crossed a small footbridge over a creek and ventured further in, where dappled sunlight turned the leaves around you a bright, vibrant emerald.

You asked your great-aunt for a book about trees at dinner, and went out at night with your flashlight to match them up with their pictures, learning all the names you could. You collected acorns and planted them in the lawn, watering them fastidiously for days.

It wasn't until the third week, when you were in the forest collecting snails for your acorn city, that you came across an open space in the woods, and met a boy bathed in light.

He seemed to be a part of the forest around him—his skin was like bark, and his hands stretched up towards the sun. He stood motionless, eyes closed, and as you watched he seemed to become more human. He took a deep breath and opened his eyes, looking out at the trees with an expression of profound fondness.

You stood up, cautiously stepping out from behind a red maple (*acer rubrum*), and he turned to you with a solemn expression.

"Who're you?" you asked, and then, "Your feet are buried in the ground!"

You helped him dig himself out, but he pulled his leg up too fast and fell across your back and the two of you landed in a heap, laughing helplessly. You ran back to the house and brought out a blanket from the sitting room and a carton of chocolate milk.

"Where did you come from?" you asked him, sitting together against the trunk of a white oak (*quercus alba*).

"I live here."

"You live in the forest?"

He nodded.

"Oh. Why haven't I seen you? I've been here for weeks!"

And you dragged him off to help you collect snails.

1991 – The Last Days of Summer

"Why don't you want to grow up?"

You were making clover chains in the shade under a balsam poplar (*populus balsamifera*) when he asked. Your fingers

slowed for a second, and you frowned over at where he was sitting, already resplendent in long loops of white flowers.

"Because grown-ups are boring. They pretend to know everything, but they don't have time for anyone."

Not wanted, you remember thinking, *not this summer*. The thought curled around your chest and squeezed.

"I never want to grow up to be like that," you said.

He frowned back at you, and you stuck out your tongue, draping another ring of clover around his neck and pushing the thought away.

"Maybe growing up is important," he said after a moment, "even if you're not sure you'll like where it takes you. When I grow up, I'll be the tallest tree in the forest."

You laughed. "Why would you want to be that tall?"

"After being sheltered for so long, I can shelter others in return. It's so much easier to help when you're grown up."

You gave an exaggerated sigh, and rested your head against his shoulder. After a minute, he reached over and wound a neatly tied string of flowers around your wrist.

The next day, you climbed into the branches of a tree you couldn't find in your book. You drew it in your notepad, and traced the outline of a group of leaves—you would send it to the author when you got home in September.

1991 – Transformation

On the final day of summer, you returned to all the places you loved most. You sat next to the flowerbed in the garden and watched the rows of flowers sway gently in the wind. You gave the gardener stern instructions on the care of your acorn city, and said goodbye to the city's snail mayor.

You saved the forest for last.

Walking through the woods that day seemed different, quieter, and you felt the first stirrings of apprehension in your chest. You had told him yesterday that you would be back to say goodbye, and he had smiled sadly at you and said nothing.

Today, he was nowhere to be found. You searched frantically among the trees, heading for the place where you first met him, with his feet buried in the ground and his arms outstretched like branches.

You knew what you would find when you got there. You knew. But it was still a shock—like a blow to the stomach—that he did not wait to say goodbye.

He was beautiful, a sapling encircled by the foliage of other trees. Looking at him, immobile and unseeing, you felt a wild, desperate urge to dig him out, to pull him free again.

You stayed for a while, to feel the contours of his bark under your hands, searching quietly for something you couldn't quite name.

There was no warmth to him now.

Eventually, you turned back towards the house and left.

2015 – Friday, 5:14pm

You came back to visit every year, for a time: in summer, in spring, even in fall, to watch his leaves change colour. You could never visit in winter.

Once, as a teenager, you came too late, in early November. You remember staring up at a skeleton, denuded, the leaves scattered around you like stars.

After that you came only during the summer.

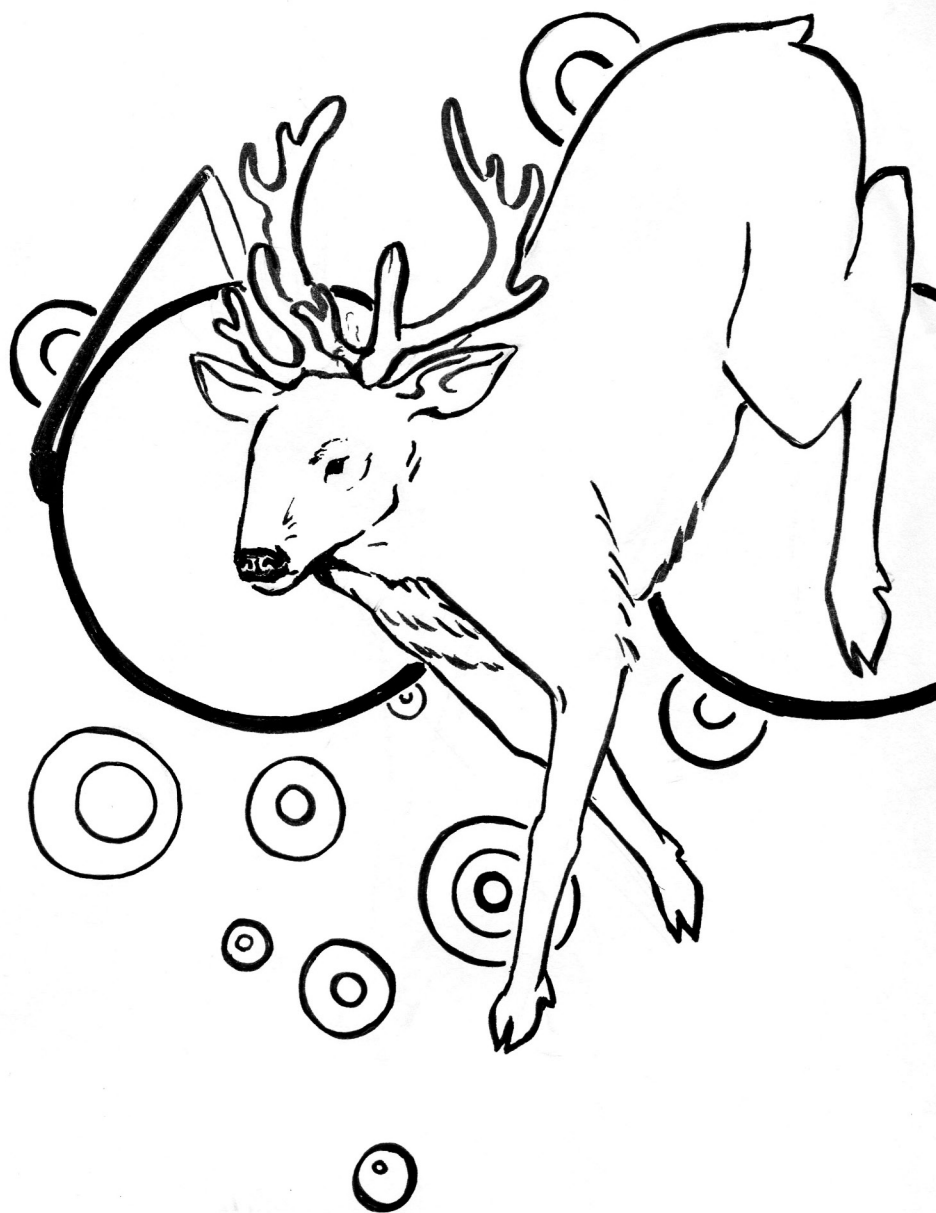
Eventually you stopped coming at all.

You'd never met anyone like him, and you're sure you never will again. No one ever replaced your memory of the boy in the woods, with skin the colour of new bark and eyes like sunlight.

In a few minutes you reach the tree; he is much larger than you remember, nearing the height of the trees around him. You sit under his branches with your knees curled into your chest and cry like you're eight years old again, sent away to live in a house full of strangers.

You feel the sun on your face, warm and bright like a caress. You stay until it sets, far beyond the tops of the trees, and the forest is bathed in darkness.

POETRY



PANTONE 17-3920: ENGLISH MANOR

BY MARGARYTA GOLOVCHENKO

Ed. Christopher Boccia | Asst. Ed. Sonia Urlando



ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL BAPTISTA

At about one a.m. Little Europe makes note
of the crescent moon

floating
unoccupied down the Thames.
To hazy eyes and tripping toes it looked like the sky
was upholding its promise of rendezvous.
The architects will remember admiring the dip of the crescent
in their mad rush home to correct the natural.
Artists will remember it as a sensual curve, the hipbone
inevitably concealed beneath silks.
Little Europe sees it as a question:
why the Thames?
On her fingers she counts down

the Volga,
her voice quiet this time of year,
murmuring lullabies to the bone sediment
inside her deepest pores

the Dnieper,
unable to sleep
so she listens to the current's caress, restless to know
how much of her identity has trickled away

the Rhine,
who begs to be renamed,
afraid of turning into a thread-thin gash, cut by the gossip

and a handful of others that Little Europe quickly dismisses
until she can go home and clarify the definition of "naturally
occurring." Some were evidently conceived
under emotional circumstances.
After a few hours she comes to a conclusion: if the Thames
cradled the decanter for centuries,
the nation's prized child, then surely
she can handle being the moon's nighttime partner.

THE BAGEL GUILLOTINE

BY MARGARYTA GOLOVCHENKO

Ed. Christopher Boccia | Asst. Ed. Stephan Goslinski



ILLUSTRATED BY SHAYLA SABADA

No one remembers temperatures colder than this;
some joke that only the human heart
can compare as a natural freezer. The garden
of prickly ice flowers amid the sloping chocolate curves
chews up the reserves,
the nostalgia for greens too tempting
(the unscented kind, the sole ones in existence now).

Chisel and hammer are put to the challenge,
conquering what might be the last slab
of a vanishing lifeblood,
ripped from the Orinoco's embrace.

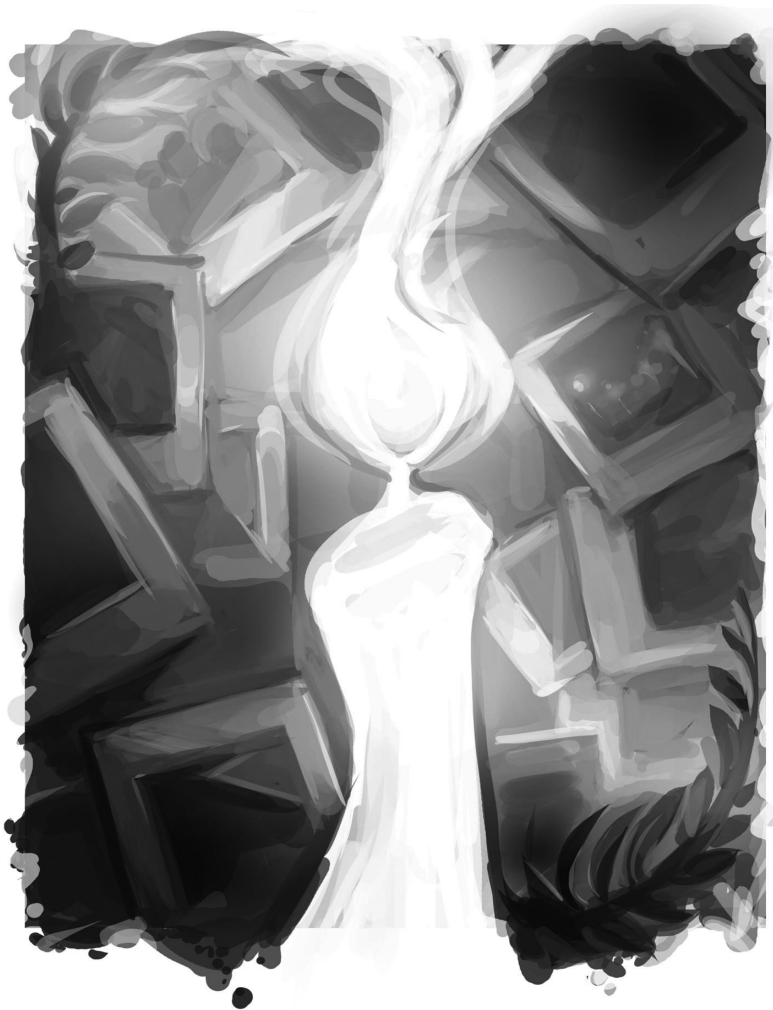
And now we have our grand artist, shivering in the
Hall of Mirrors with only the self for answers.
Around him light continues its battle with polished glass,
desperate for a consummation with nature's last breath.

He has seen her,
the one who hides beyond the gilded doors and lines up
pastries for execution. He sculpts for her,
infusing each new line with a truth
the children the cities the chill
while golden platters are continually paraded out the front doors.

LEFT BEHIND – A PHOTOGRAPH

BY ERIN TOBIN

Ed. Christopher Boccia | Asst. Ed. Margaryta Golovchenko



ILLUSTRATED BY LINA NGUYEN

Her memories were only snapshots.
Polaroids held up to a flickering candle—
Darkness lit up by the flash,
tarps hung from evergreens,
three blurry figures in raincoats,
shadow of someone's finger.

Empty Laundromat parking lot, night, fluorescent lights.
Child sitting on a washing machine,
swinging her feet.

WINGED VICTORIES

BY NUARD TADEVOSYAN

Ed. Christopher Boccia | Asst. Ed. Polina Zak



ILLUSTRATED BY SHUIYAO (YAO) WANG

Like the other half-formed sirens,
born hungry,
I walk on chicken feet,
cheeks hot in tentative beauty,
my brilliance tuned to the night.
Snakeskin and rosewater
hide in my hair, little nests
studded with pages
from diaries
written for the hourglass,
candles spilling slow
like a secret.

He is frightened
of my wet and warmth,
but the haunt of drowned flesh
is too much for me to bear.
I envelop him in lilacs and love;
if this is pleasure, my body is greedy.
I moan my own forgiveness,
flowers
spilling from my neck.

Pain sears into my tender
birdlike palms.
As he waits for the love
and the fire,
I whisper the song
of lost daughters (*o lover*)
into his ear,
where my fragility
cuts:
his horrified gaze lingers
on my claws and talons,
not for a moment
thinking of the hunger
in the kiss.

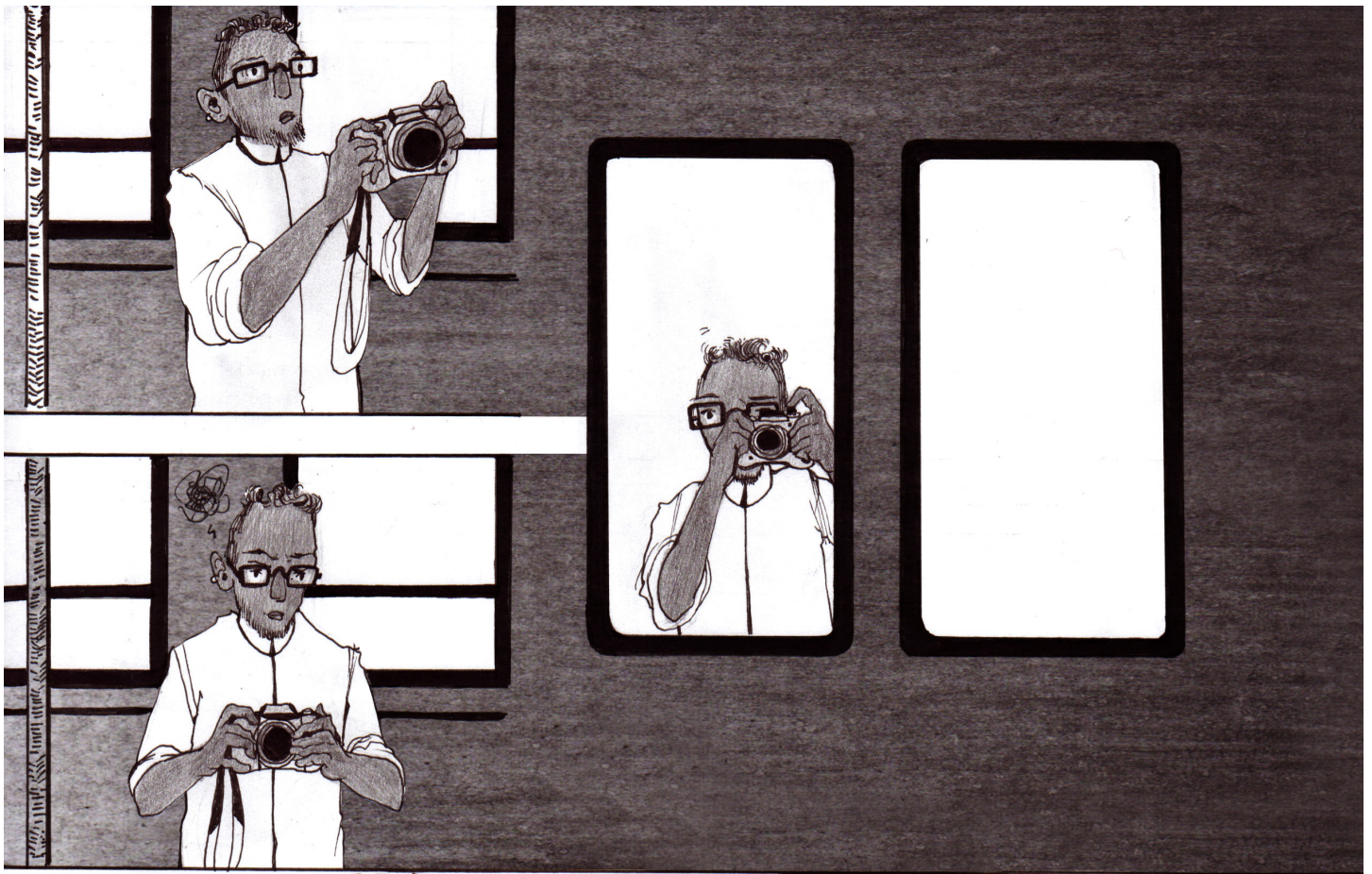
Ghost of the afterbirth under my nails,
I sing the song
of Rome burning, animal fat
clinging to my bowed lips.
I rise
from your sheets,
fall from you.
I have eaten myself
sick, but the hunger
pushes
and pulls, marking
the drip of hot blood
into the earth, and I rise,
I rise,
newly sharp,
with many teeth.

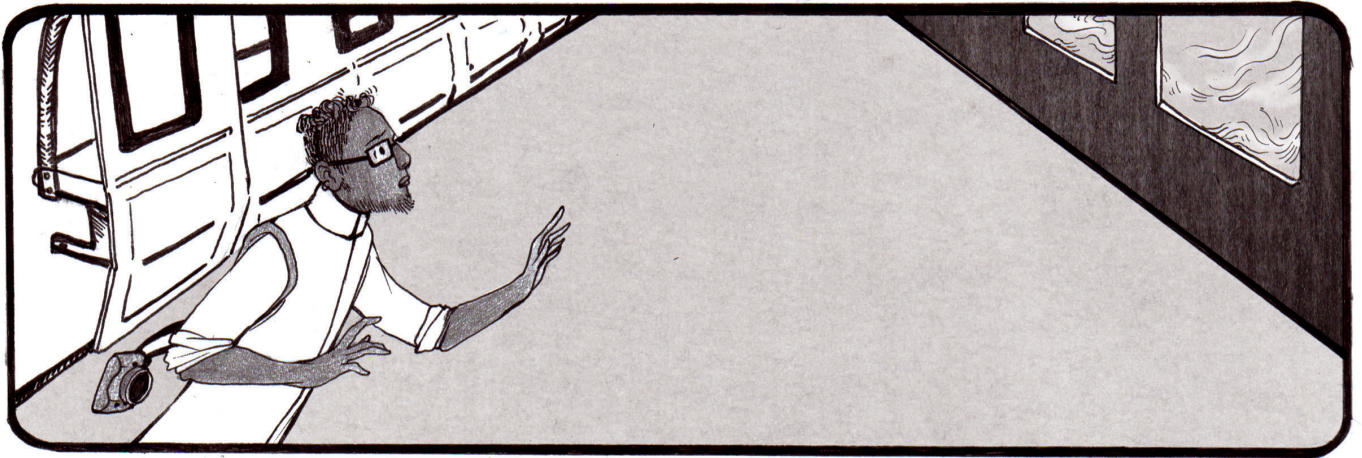
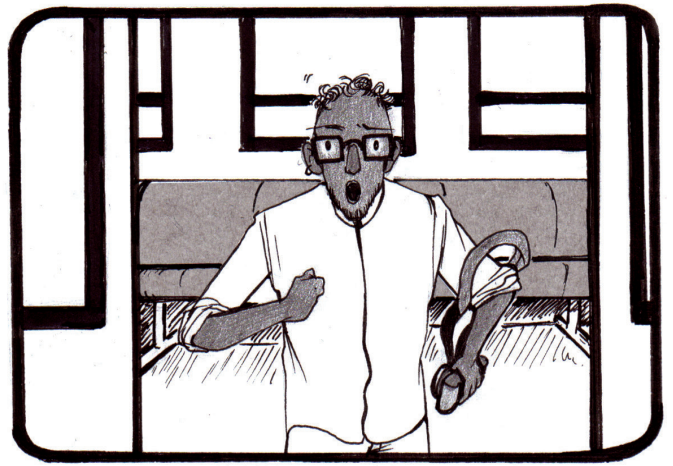
GRAPHIC FICTION



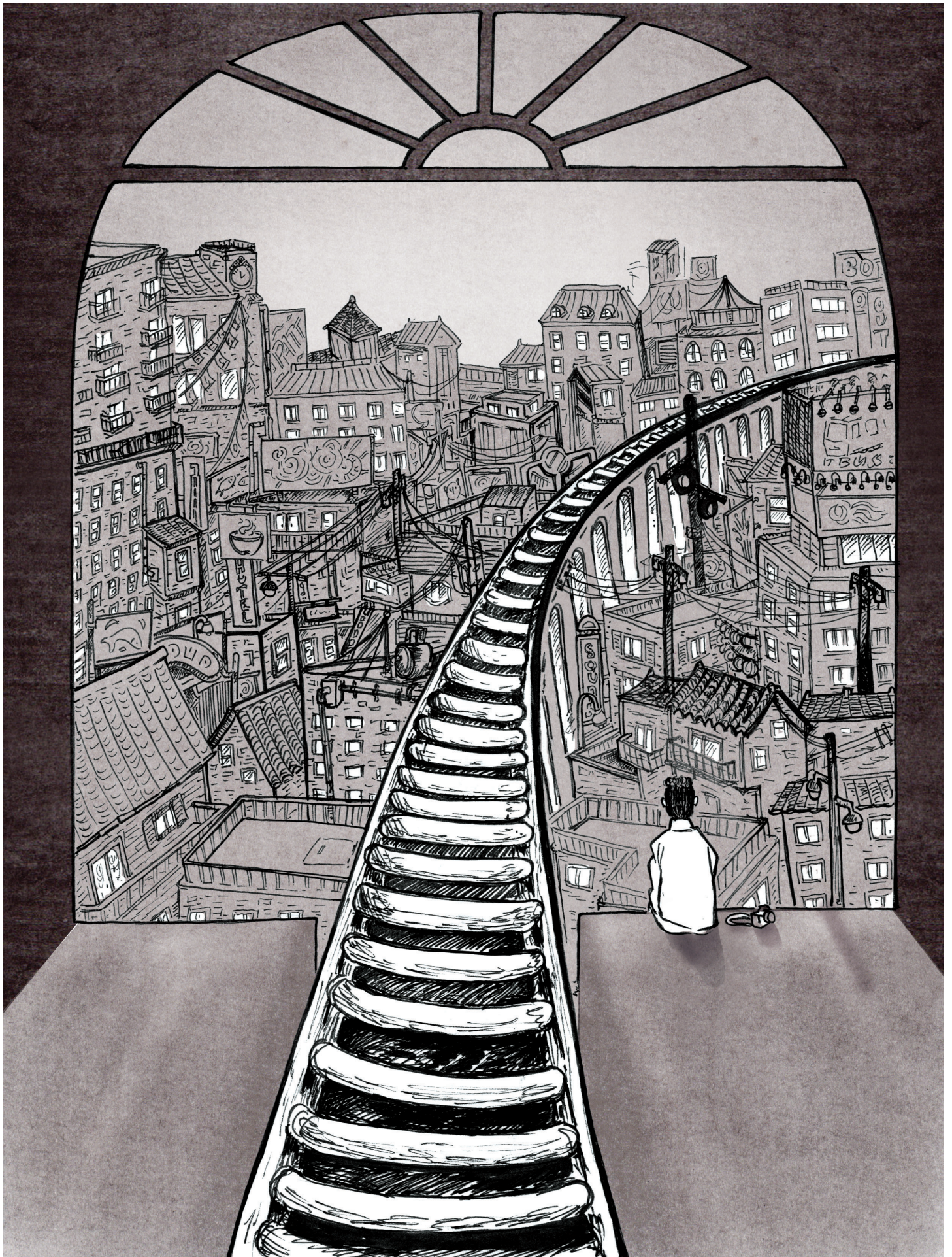




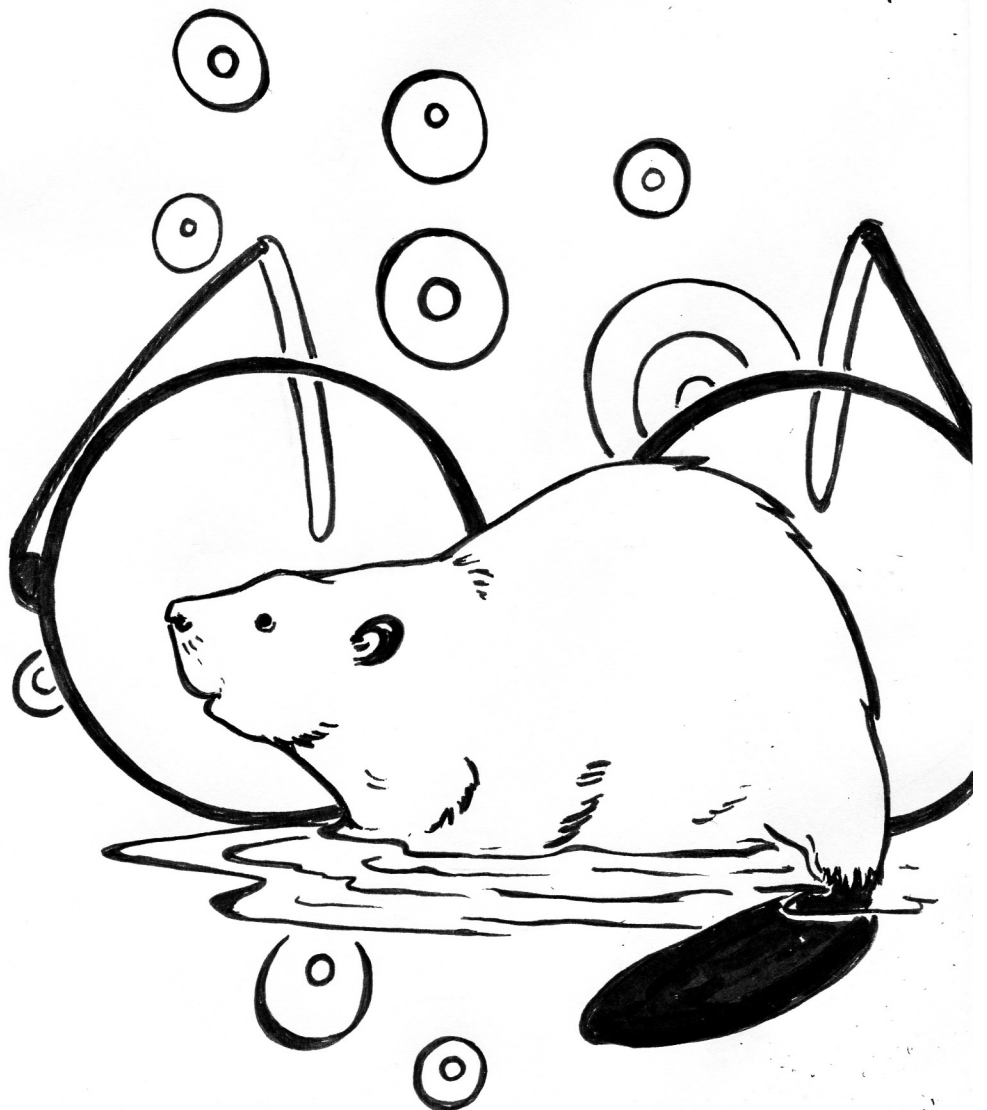








NONFICTION



THE ALCHEMY OF FOLKORE:

HOW THE BOHEMIANS ANIMATED THE GOLEM OF PRAGUE

BY BENSON CHEUNG

Ed. Janice To | Asst. Ed. Margaryta Golovchenko

THE EVENING SKY is still bright when the Grim Reaper (or Death, or whatever the tour guide intended to dress up as) takes us to the Maisel Synagogue at the heart of Prague's Jewish Quarter to tell us about "the most famous legend of Prague"—the Golem:

Around the year 1600, the famous Rabbi Loew—a Kabbalah master—created the Golem from clay pieces. Because the Golem could be ordered to do anything by inserting a magical stone in its forehead, it was suddenly in demand everywhere. Even the Emperor Rudolf II hoped to use it, to conquer the world. Alas, because the Golem was meant to be used for good, the selfishness of man drove it mad and it went on a destructive rampage. The frightened people petitioned Rabbi Loew to conjure up a storm. It struck the shem—which, in Hebrew, means "name"—off the Golem's forehead, and the Golem fell to pieces. The rabbi picked up the remains, and placed them in the attic of the Old-New Synagogue, where the Golem's spirit still protects the building to this day.¹

This is the story I had waited the whole tour to hear, and I had thought that hearing it at the Maisel Synagogue would lend some magic to this variation of a classic folktale. I am mistaken. The reflection of the bright evening sky in the Synagogue's clean exterior and the sounds of the bustling city strip away much of the story's suspense. The loud carnivalesque piano music coming from the Golem's eponymous restaurant also does little to shroud the story in atmospheric mystery. It's as if the Jewish Ghetto (or perhaps the Golem's spirit itself) is conspiring against the proper telling of this story, to enviously guard its mystique against tourists. Too bad for the Grim Reaper.

The rowdiness of Prague seems to ignore history. By day, tourists gawk at landmarks for the sake of sightseeing, likely without acknowledgement of their cultural significance. By night, partygoers rush by these landmarks to enjoy Prague's notorious nightlife scene. The tourism industry in Prague has necessarily turned the city into a sort of historical clean slate for outsiders. In contrast, the Golem story's evolution reveals centuries of cultural blending and historical layering that neither the sanitized city nor the themed ghost tours are able to return to life.

Although current tradition says that the Golem of Prague was made from the River Vltava's clay, it did not originate in Prague, or even in Europe, for that matter. In fact, the Golem appears as far back as biblical times. Mentioned once in the Bible, Psalm 139 contains the first recorded reference to the term: "My bone was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret, and formed in the lowest part of the Earth. Thy eyes did see my golem..." (Nocks 282–283). Because of the limited information presented in Scripture, the other tropes associated with the Golem arose from subsequent commentary by Talmudic scholars. These tropes include the Golem lacking a soul and an intellect, possessing great powers, and meeting an eventual demise by returning to dust (Nocks 283–286). Drawing from these theological interpretations, medieval Kabbalah mystics introduced elements of sorcery, specifically arcane letter magic: the Golem could be brought to life by placing the proper set of letter combinations on its forehead, and destroyed by removing the letters (Nocks 287–289).

While the Golem's mythology was consolidated by centuries of religious scholarship, the first folk narrative recognizably about the Golem was, in fact, set in Chelm, Poland, and features Rabbi Elijah, who animates a clay Golem to do chores for him. The tale was recorded on an early sixteenth century manuscript, though

it was later substantially expanded upon in a 1674 letter by Christoph Arnold. He elaborated on the animation process, which involved etching the word for Truth/God ("Emeth") on the Golem's forehead, drawing on the Kabbalistic tradition (Nocks 290). Unlike Prague's story of the Golem, this one ends rather morbidly: the deanimated Golem tips over and crushes the rabbi to death (Neubauer 298–299). Though it's an interesting variation, no one today tells the story of the Golem of Chelm.

So how did the Golem migrate from Poland over to Prague? The literary genealogy of this geographical shift is well documented. In 1808, Jakob Grimm (of the Brothers Grimm) wrote a version of the Golem story in a literary journal dedicated to the Romantic Movement. While it was largely based on Arnold's letter—though Grimm didn't cite his source—he universalized the story by stripping it of a concrete place and specific rabbi (Dekel and Gurley 242–243, 249–250). From there, it went through successive iterations by both Jewish and Gentile authors until Leopold Weisel wrote the nineteenth century's definitive version of the Golem in 1847, firmly entrenching the story in Rudolf II's late sixteenth century Prague (Kieval 11–12).

Yet the question remains: why Prague? In the early to mid-eighteenth century, around the time when the Golem of Chelm briefly flourished as the main version of the Golem story, Prague was an important center of Bohemian Jewish activity. Trade and cultural exchange between Poland and Bohemia undoubtedly helped transmit the Chelm Golem story southward (Kieval 8–9).

Jewish Prague also had a great historical figure attached to its history that Chelm didn't have: Rabbi Judah Ben Loew, reverently known the Maharal. A scholar who became the Chief Rabbi of Prague in 1592, he was a model community leader and renowned for his teachings (Murphy 120–121). The Maharal and his standing as a scholar proved

¹ Adapted from a version of the Golem folktale as told by a Haunted Prague tour guide.

important for more than just defining Jewish literary tropes. After the Bohemian Jews were emancipated in 1781, they felt the need to develop their own distinct national identity and establish their legitimacy as a historic nation. While traditionalist Jews sought to capitalize on the Maharal's conservatism, Enlightenment thinkers hoped the Maharal would serve as a rational, scholarly figure to represent a modernizing Jewish community. In the end, the latter viewpoint won the day. Through their retelling of the Golem myth, Enlightenment thinkers helped redefine Bohemian Jewishness as being driven by principles of scientific inquiry and rationality (Gelbin 44–57).

Moreover, the reinvigoration of a Bohemian Jewish identity was embedded in even larger processes. Jewish folklore contributed to, and arguably became subsumed under, a larger Czech nationalist identity. Czech writers incorporated folk tales into nationalist collections, perhaps because they helped to reinforce Czech claims of being a historic nation. This literary movement was so successful that by 1912, the Maharal was considered an integral part of Czech national memory—the country honoured him with a grand statue at Prague's Town Hall (Kieval 14–15).

Indeed, it seems strange at first that this scholar posthumously became the hero of a spurious legend. But we know that this mythologization was in response to the German Romantics, who borrowed the Golem story to explore their own literary tropes of monsters and Faustian bargains (Dekel and Gurley 244). Yet, to the Jews, previous versions of the story stressed “rabbinic mastery of the holy word” as the reason for why the Golem could be created, and consequently they were disappointed that the Romantics emphasized the monster and its grotesqueness (Dekel and Gurley 250–251). To bring the story's focus back to the figure of the rabbi, the Jews scripted the Maharal as the Golem's creator since he was well-regarded for his Kabbalah-inspired philosophical teachings, as opposed to his participation in any supposed Kabbalistic magic (ibid 250–251).

Given the Maharal's scholarly reputation, a revived interest in his life ironically coincided with the growing appeal of Kabbalistic mysticism to mid-eighteenth century Jewish elites in Prague (Kieval 8–9). Traditional Jewish folklore often features rabbis as scholarly heroes whose ability to wield magic testifies to their moral integrity and equates learning to magic itself, an extension of

God's great powers. While the Maharal was chosen to be a literary protagonist because of his image as a pious community leader and a man of rationalism, his occupation as a rabbi also inadvertently associated him with magic (Murphy 117–118).

Besides having a reputation of being a learned scholar, the Maharal had another attraction as a folk hero: he was increasingly remembered as a defender of the Jewish people. His brief summit with Emperor Rudolf II in 1592 is particularly well known, though only one primary source references it, and the details are sparse. Nevertheless, this meeting is credited with helping to temper “anti-Jewish political activity in the region,” turning the Maharal into a sort of miracle worker (Nocks 290–291). Seeing as the legend of the Maharal became intertwined with the Golem's story, it isn't surprising that in 1912, Yudel Rosenberg included the Jewish fear of blood libel by the Christians as the character Maharal's motivation for creating the Golem in his book *The Golem and the Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*.² To be precise, the Maharal created the Golem to protect the Jewish Ghetto from an impending pogrom. This was the first time that the story's source of danger came from outside the community, not from within (Kieval 15–16). As Rosenberg's embellishment reflected late nineteenth and early twentieth century anxieties about rising anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe (Glinert 83), romanticizing the sage as a hero delivering the Jews from persecution was a way to offer comfort and strength to the Jewish community. As a result, the Golem soon became a symbol of protection. Some variants of the folktale even suggest that the Golem's protective powers helped to save the Jewish Ghetto from destruction during the Holocaust.

This most recent figuring of the Golem as a protector of the community gained traction over the course of the turbulent twentieth century. Today, anxieties about the recession and geopolitical threats like Russia's rise have been characterized as potential reasons for the cultural revival of the Golem in the twenty-first century (Bilefsky).

It is another bright day when I participate in a second walking tour—this time, a romp

² Rosenberg, Yudel. Trans. Curt Leviant. *The Golem and the Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. Print.

A collection of interrelated vignettes about a sixteenth century rabbi and his golem.

around the Jewish Ghetto guided by a grey-haired woman, who is astonishingly spry for her age. We stop by the Maisel Synagogue, and I glance at the Golem restaurant: it is dark and quiet, a far cry from last night's boisterous piano. The Golem is not mentioned. Once again, Prague is determined to have the Golem remain its best-kept secret.

As the tour winds down a street, moving away from Prague's bustling Old Town Square, I privately ask our guide about the Golem. She offers me another version of the tale:

Rabbi Loew animated the Golem in his rabbinic house to protect the Jews in the Prague Ghetto. After animating the Golem, Rabbi Loew went to the synagogue to pray during Shabbat, when he was interrupted by a mob of scared community members.

They cried out: “Rabbi, stop your prayers! The Golem is too dangerous! You must immediately return home, calm him down, and then you can celebrate your Shabbat.”

The rabbi did not move a muscle. “Sorry,” he said, “Shabbat has already started, so you must come Sunday morning, when Shabbat is over, and I will do it.”

“You are the only one who can stop him. You are the only one who knows the formula,” the people pleaded. They invoked a plea long echoed in Jewish philosophy: “And if you are the only one who can... then you must.”

The Rabbi understood what needed to be done. He ended his prayers and went home to calm the Golem. He decided that there was no longer any need for the Golem to protect the Prague Jews, so he placed the Golem's inanimate remains in the attic of the Old-New Synagogue, knowing that the attic is inaccessible because there are no ladders. Returning to the synagogue, he restarted Shabbat prayers, from the beginning, as if nothing had ever interrupted him.

Years later, a journalist took advantage of construction work at the Old-New Synagogue to climb into the attic. There was nothing inside except dust.

*Prayers in Prague still start twice on Shabbat.*³

The tour guide tells me that the historian

³ Adapted from a version of the Golem folktale as told to me by a tour guide.

who discovered the Golem was, in fact, a real person: Rabbi Loew's Shabbat goy (a non-Jewish servant working for Jews during Shabbat). I am skeptical about this embellishment—the Golem, after all, did not originate with the Maharal, but rather preceded his lifetime. Yet, the differences between the two tour guides' stories speak to the power and mutability of folktales. One stresses the Golem falling victim to the evilness of man, while the other upholds the Maharal's piety and integrity. The amount of magic involved in the Golem's life and death alters depending on what imagery or moral the storyteller wants to emphasize. However, the core details remain constant: each variation includes Rabbi Loew, Kabbalistic magic, and the clay monster.

There are no monuments or museums dedicated to the Golem, but perhaps I will go looking for it in souvenir shops. The tour guide tells me to look for a brown, neckless figure. What she's describing is the most iconic visualization of the Golem, created by the Art Deco sculptor Jaroslav Horejc for the 1951 classic Czechoslovak comedy film *The Emperor and the Golem*.⁴

Back in 2009, the *New York Times* noted how ubiquitous the Golem was in Prague. The tourism industry was scrambling to produce merchandise or brand their businesses after the Golem (Bilefsky). Still, I am surprised that I can't find many traces of the giant. I ask a souvenir shop manager if he has any keychains related to the Golem. He shakes his head, and instead offers me paraphernalia featuring Prague's other dull-witted icon, the Good Soldier Svejk. I politely decline.

Since the *Times* article was published, the Golem's image was suddenly snatched away from the public domain, when a 2010 lawsuit returned the intellectual property rights of Horejc's Golem to his estate. Since then, while the folktale itself is still in the public domain, his estate has tightened the use of this particular version of the Golem, going after companies that commercialized Horejc's Golem ("Czech Republic"). It's likely that this crackdown was intended to ensure Horejc's legacy as a serious sculptor.⁵ The net

result was that Prague's souvenir industry moved on to mass produce other icons, and, much to my chagrin, I'm unable to buy any officially licensed Golem merchandise.

But there is a lone survivor in the back of the shop: a cheap-looking Golem-shaped magnet enclosing a picture of the Old-New Synagogue. Despite the raging forces of the courts and tourist markets, the Golem still vigilantly protects its home, refusing to return to the dustbin of Prague's consciousness.

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⁴ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Emperor_and_the_Golem.

⁵ "This current visual image of the Golem was created by Horejc for a couple of film comedies made in the Communist era (1951), and that his own personal sculptural style was exactly the opposite—a decorative style something like Art Deco. In fact he would probably not even want his reputation to be linked to the statue of the Golem—which may be one of the reasons why his family cracked down on it. (If their interest was only commercial, then surely they'd be franchising the work like mad.)" (D. Sparling, personal communication, April 21, 2016.)

EXPLORING COMMUNAL TRAUMAS AND MODES OF HEALING IN EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL'S *STATION ELEVEN*

BY EMILY DEIBERT

Ed. Janice To | Asst. Ed. Rej Ford

IN HER SEMINAL WORK on contemporary trauma theory, literary critic Cathy Caruth defines trauma not as an “encounter with death,” but rather as “the ongoing experience of having survived it” (7). This “crisis of life” (7), as Caruth puts it, is at the very heart of her understanding of traumatic experience and healing. Drawing on Freud’s writings on trauma and suffering, she describes trauma as a “breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world” to suggest that traumatic experience fundamentally alters the ways in which trauma survivors experience the world (4). It is for this reason, perhaps, that speculative fiction is particularly well-suited to explorations of trauma and the trauma narrative: “it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of [speculative] literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet” (3).

Canadian writer Emily St. John Mandel’s post-apocalyptic novel *Station Eleven* explores Caruth’s ideas of trauma through an examination of the traumatic aftermath of civilization’s collapse on both an individual and communal level. By resisting temporal linearity and traditional characterization, Mandel probes the “possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential” because of trauma (11). She therefore chooses to offer the story in disjointed pieces that will only form a coherent whole by the end of the novel. She addresses the ways in which trauma fundamentally alters a perception of the self by interrogating the idea that forgetting, rather than remembrance, may be “a necessary part of understanding” individual traumas (32). At the same time, Mandel explores the necessity of healing on a communal level, and puts forth the idea that art can be used as a means by which collective healing can occur.

Although *Station Eleven* begins with a fictional pandemic that leads to the collapse of civilization, the novel is ultimately—like many trauma narratives—a story about time

(Jacobs, qtd. in Caruth 114). Traumatic experience, the novel suggests, has the capacity to fundamentally alter the idea of time by demarcating a “divide between a *before* and an *after*” (Mandel 20, emphasis added). Indeed, time itself in the novel is literally “reset by catastrophe” (231). Rather than continuing to measure time according to the traditional calendar, after the outbreak of the novel’s fatal illness “the years [start to be...] counted off one by one from the moment of disaster” (231). In the face of trauma, the measurement of time and underlying assumptions about the nature of time must be reconsidered. For the characters in the novel—particularly those old enough to have experienced both the *before* and the *after* defined by the novel’s traumatic pandemic—temporal linearity is no longer accessible. Disruption to an ordinary progression of time is most evident in protagonist Clark’s struggle to distinguish between past, present, and future. His inability to process time linearly is apparent from the outset of his traumatic experience: on the brink of civilization’s collapse, Clark describes how he feels “wistful in advance for the present moment” (Mandel 233). His experience of time becomes an amalgamation of contradictory tenses and terms. The juxtaposition of wistfulness, which is typically associated with events that have already passed, with the word “advance,” which carries connotations of the future, shows that for Clark time is no longer sequential but instead is experienced as a simultaneity in the present moment.

The structure of the novel itself echoes this “breach” in straightforward chronology; it refuses to conform to a linear sequence of events and instead approaches time—and trauma—as “a constellation of life experiences [made up of] discrete happening[s]” (Erikson 185). *Station Eleven* spans several different lifetimes and jumps back and forth between characters’ distant pasts and civilization’s far future, remaining ambiguous about which

particular moment in time constitutes the present day of the novel. This nonlinear approach to time in the narrative’s structure parallels the disruption of time experienced by the novel’s characters. Trauma robs *Station Eleven*’s protagonists of the ability to process time sequentially, and the asynchrony of the novel’s interwoven narratives reflects this experience.

In addition to rupturing the mind’s experience of time, *Station Eleven* also explores the ways in which trauma distorts one’s identity and memory. Throughout the novel, the characters are confronted with what Caruth describes as the “incomprehensibility of [...] survival” (58). Jeevan, one of the novel’s primary characters, describes how in the face of death he feels “extravagantly, guiltily alive” (Mandel 11). Before the pandemic, Jeevan—like all the characters in the novel—takes his survival in the world for granted. With the majority of the population eradicated, however, he is forced to confront his existence in a new light. Like many trauma survivors, Jeevan feels that his very *being* has become excessive, and is guilty about simply surviving—guilty about something over which he had no control. He is subject to an “oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of survival*” in that he is simultaneously glad to have survived the pandemic and guilty that others did not (Caruth 7). When Jeevan contemplates the death that he has somehow avoided, he describes how he has “never felt so alive or so sad” (Mandel 193). Trauma survivors in the novel are forced to consider their survival in light of such great disaster, and in doing so must reformulate their underlying convictions of identity and what it means to be alive.

Mandel also explores the notion that “forgetting [...] may be] a necessary part of understanding” by contrasting protagonist Kirsten’s “problems with memory” with intrusions of the past experienced by the novel’s mysterious prophet (Caruth 23;

Mandel 113). Although Kirsten has many unexplained questions about her time on the road, she comes to believe in the “necessity of forgetting in order to live” (Lecouvette, qtd. in Caruth 122). The fact that she “can’t remember the year [she] spent on the road [...] means [she] can’t remember the worst” of what she encountered (Mandel 195). Only through forgetting her most horrific experiences is she ultimately able to move past them.

Kirsten’s inability to remember is contrasted numerous times in the novel with the prophet’s inability to forget. The prophet is described as being about Kirsten’s age and was once also “a [child] adrift on the road” (Mandel 304). They differ, however, in that what Kirsten forgets, the prophet remembers. While Kirsten has lost a year of memory, the prophet is clearly haunted by it: “if you’ve wandered all your life, as I have,” he tells Kirsten, “through the terrible chaos, if you remember, as I do, everything you’ve ever seen, then you know there’s more than one way to die” (61-2). The prophet is perhaps alluding not only to the uncountable deaths he has witnessed, but also to the figurative “death” of the person he was before he faced the horrors of “the road.” For the prophet, who cannot escape his traumatic years on the road as Kirsten can, remembering is akin to experiencing these traumatic events over and over again. He lives in these traumatic memories as much as he lives in the present day, and it is this inability to move past the terrible chaos of the road that ultimately leads to his demise.

Although Kirsten does not have the choice to remember, she has a choice that the prophet does not have: the choice to “stop[...] *trying* to remember” (295, emphasis added). The knowledge that she is able to forget, while the prophet is forced to remember, ultimately allows Kirsten to reach a sense of understanding regarding the prophet’s misguided actions. “Whatever else the prophet had become,” Kirsten realizes, “he’d once been a boy adrift on the road, and perhaps he’d had the misfortune of remembering everything” (304). Some traumas, the novel suggests, can only be confronted through “the freedom of forgetting” (Caruth 32). What the prophet—and, presumably, Kirsten—experienced on the road was too unbearable to live with, and it is precisely because she cannot remember any of it that Kirsten is able to leave her traumatic past behind.

Though forgetting is positioned as an important method of healing in the novel,

the primary recovery mechanism examined in *Station Eleven* is art. The mission of the novel’s Travelling Symphony is to distract from the horrors of the novel’s post-apocalyptic world, and to remind their audiences that there is more to the world than just surviving in it, “because survival is insufficient” (Mandel 58). As a result of the fatal pandemic that killed off the majority of the population, characters in the novel are stranded in a landscape entirely unlike anything they have experienced before. To cope with this, the Travelling Symphony identifies with the works of Shakespeare. *Station Eleven*’s world is one ravaged by a fatal disease—a world in which the comforts of modern medicine, worldwide communication, and electricity are inaccessible. Shakespeare is relatable because he, too, “had lived in a plague-ridden society with no electricity” (Mandel 288). For this reason alone, the Travelling Symphony uses his works as a way of coming to terms with society’s collective trauma and loss.

In performing Shakespearean plays exclusively, the Travelling Symphony elides a vast range of cultural responses to trauma. But the novel directly confronts this issue when one of the members of the Travelling Symphony—the clarinet player—admits that she “hate[s] Shakespeare” and “[finds] the Symphony’s insistence on performing Shakespeare insufferable” (Mandel 288). She argues that “[s]urvival might be insufficient [...] but [...] so [is] Shakespeare” (288). By addressing the possibility that more than just Shakespeare—and, by extension, more than just the Travelling Symphony—is necessary for healing, Mandel acknowledges the importance of culturally specific responses to trauma. Like the clarinet player, she admits that “the repertoire’s inadequate” (288), and although Shakespeare may be all the Travelling Symphony knows, a wide variety of art forms can be used to recover from traumatic experience.

Although the Travelling Symphony never explores art outside of Shakespeare, the novel itself considers other methods of traumatic healing through art with the metafictional graphic novel *Dr. Eleven*. The graphic novel’s main characters are citizens of Undersea, a place where “people liv[ed] out their lives in underwater fallout shelters, clinging to the hope that the world they remembered could be restored” (Mandel 213). Station Eleven—after which the novel is named—is the space station that harbours Undersea. Like the post-apocalyptic world of the novel, Station Eleven is a society that has experienced

great trauma and disaster, and is made up of people who “spend all their lives waiting for their lives to begin” and “[trying] to forget the sweetness of life on Earth” (Mandel 86; 42). This parallels the struggles experienced by the novel’s protagonists in trying to forget the horrors that they have experienced while also refusing to leave the old world behind. Although the Travelling Symphony performs Shakespeare as a means of accepting trauma, the world of the novel is permeated by this intertextual graphic novel. “Station Eleven,” Mandel writes, “is all around them” (107).

The intertextual *Dr. Eleven* allows Kirsten to come to terms with the traumas—both remembered and forgotten—that she has experienced in the post-apocalyptic world of the novel. The horrors of her past are so far removed from what she understands as reality, that only through the speculative world of Station Eleven does she come to terms with her trauma. By having Kirsten leave *Dr. Eleven* behind at the end of the novel, Mandel demonstrates that Kirsten both understands the role trauma has played in her past and can begin to let go of the pain these experiences have caused.

In *Station Eleven*, traumatic experience is conceptualized as a “breach” in the ways in which trauma survivors experience time, identity, and the world around them (Caruth 4). Art is suggested as a means by which recovery from trauma can begin. Through a disruption of conventional chronology, Mandel explores the loss of temporal linearity as a result of trauma. Conceptions of identity and remembrance are addressed in order to put forth the idea that forgetting may be a valid way to heal from traumatic experience. The novel also asserts that in the face of trauma, mere survival is not enough: it is only through art and creativity that society is able to cope with the collective trauma at the heart of the novel. By exploring the effects of trauma on individuals and on society, Mandel’s novel asserts the importance of healing and encourages an examination of the many methods through which healing can occur.

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STAFF BIOS CONT'D

Fiction Editor

LARA THOMPSON is a fourth-year student majoring in English and Classical Civilizations. No, to her shame, she cannot read Ancient Greek or Latin. Her other interests include Canadian fashion, film noir, and science fiction. Lara is currently a features writer for *theBUZZ*, an LGBTQ+ magazine in Toronto, and is a member of the Editor's Association of Canada. After university, she plans on becoming a Certified Professional Editor, a job that will deal with grammatical and stylistic inconsistencies and consistently earn her no money. Lara is thrilled to be part of the University of Toronto's one and only genre journal.

Nonfiction Editor

JANICE TO is an expert all-you-can-eat sushi eater, movie addict, and sloth-lover. She spends 90% of her day wishing she were a wizard and the rest of it being a fourth-year English and Psychology Major. When she's not lost in University College or in her own thoughts, she's indulging in the mildly sadistic pastime of dragging scissor blades across grammar mistakes in *The Globe and Mail*. Naturally then, Janice is drawn to speculative nonfiction—and to horror!—and she is extremely excited to be working at *The Spectatorial* for a third year. One day, she will bake a cake filled with rainbows and smiles and everyone will eat and be happy.

Graphic Fiction Editor

AMY WANG has been a ravenous reader of comic books and speculative fiction for most of her literate years. As a student of English and Visual Art, her pipe dream has always been to work in the comic industry in some capacity. Her current dream is to become a space pirate. She is also a technical theatre geek and can usually be found lurking backstage at the Hart House Theatre or the Isabel Bader Theatre, adjusting lights and muttering to herself. She is so excited to be a part of the stunningly talented staff of *The Spectatorial* and has high hopes for the upcoming year!

Poetry Editor

CHRISTOPHER BOCCIA is a fourth-year student at the University of Toronto. An acknowledged nature nerd, Chris is studying Ecology & Evolutionary Biology and English. He is also currently editing 'Red List' assessments of endangered lizard species for U of T's Mahler lab, which has graciously agreed to supervise his Master's degree research. Chris enjoys hiking, birdwatching, and road trips, and has travelled throughout North and Central America. His poetry and prose have been influenced by a wide variety of writers, styles, and experiences, and have benefited from the criticism of noted poet Al Moritz and best-selling author John Bemrose.

Communications Coordinator

MICHELLE MONTEIRO has been writing since her hands could grasp paper and pencils. She's learned that a pencil is an extension of the hand and a gateway to the psyche. Currently she is an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, completing a BA in English and Book & Media Studies. At sixteen, her short story "Serenidipity" was published in *Canadian Voices: Volume Two*, which can be found at Chapters Indigo. For more of her quirkiness, read her numerous articles published on arbitragemagazine.com or quantumrun.com. She is excited to become *The Spectatorial's* first-ever Communications Coordinator this year.

Layout Editor

ARIANA YOUM enjoys warm weather accompanied by berries, books, and a hammock in which she can occasionally nap. She is a Psychology Research Specialist, with a special focus in memory research, and an English Minor. Please excuse her when she gets abnormally excited over some obscure grammar rule. She is also rather obsessed with science fiction, and is patiently waiting for the day when she will be able to teleport. Until then, she shall design away. She looks forward to working with *The Spectatorial's* amazing crew this year, and wishes them much love.

Editorial Board

REJ FORD identifies both as a third-year Biology and Animal Physiology Major and as a card-carrying Trekkie. After devouring fairly awful science fiction and fantasy novellas as a child, she finally found Orson Scott Card and became a full-fledged fan of everything speculative. She spends much of her time explaining anime subplots to highly patient people, and the rest trying to reconcile the biological sciences with robotics—otherwise known as: how to turn her dogs into sentient AIs. She is incredibly excited to become a member of *The Spectatorial's* Editorial Board and to explore the wide world of writing and editing.

BEN BERMAN GHAN is a second-year English student at the University of Toronto. When he was four, he walked into a room and saw the Death Star explode, and it was all downhill from there. He sits on an iron throne of comic books and understands theories of time travel better than he understands linear time. His first novel *Wychman Road* was finally published in January 2016, and the sequel *The Army of Stone* will hit shelves this coming year. He does not understand why he is writing this in the third person. Find him on Twitter: @Wychwords.

VICTORIA LIAO is a cat-lady-in-training and third-year student majoring in English and Sexual Diversity Studies and minoring in Contemporary Asian Studies. Having grown up on a diet of feminist fantasy novels and rich fantastical role-playing

games, she has since taken a keen interest in the representation of marginalized voices within fiction—especially speculative works. When she isn't editing for *The Spec* or reading prose for *Looseleaf Magazine*, she can be observed humming harmonies and pretending to write. In her spare time, Victoria can be found binge-reading webcomics at four a.m. or expressing her excitement over digital story-telling methods.

POLINA ZAK is a quirky fourth-year student at the University of Toronto. She is double-majoring in Biology and Sociology and minoring in English. She greatly enjoys learning about different worldviews and being able to understand new concepts by applying ideas from the three subjects she studies. She likes to encourage the people around her to pursue their own expression through writing. Creative writing has been Polina's hobby for many years, and she believes that it is one of the best ways to relax and let off some steam—especially after a long, stressful day.

First-Year Editorial Board

STEPHANIE GAO is a first-year student who doesn't know what to do with her life but is studying Humanities anyway because her procrastination comes in the form of writing crappy poetry. In her spare time, she either attempts to draw, swoons over F. Scott Fitzgerald's writing, or feels too much for mythological and historical characters. She recognizes that being chosen for *The Spectatorial's* First-Year Editorial Board is akin to getting accepted into an Ivy League university, and she treasures the opportunity to get to work on *The Spec*.

MARGARYTA GOLOVCHENKO has heard every joke in the book when it comes to her name. When not maneuvering around her mountain of to-be-read books, she can be found writing poetry, which has appeared in journals here and there. Currently, her biggest struggle, however, is getting her novel-in-progress characters to cooperate, a problem she usually washes away with countless cups of tea. Margaryta is thrilled to be one of the first-year editors this year for *The Spectatorial*, and can't wait for all the adventures the position entails.

STEPHAN GOSLINSKI is a first-year actor and medievalist at U of T, a dedicated music lover, a hard-core gamer, and, above all, a storyteller. For as long as he can remember, he's been spilling his overactive imagination onto page, stage, and beyond. He not only lives and breathes graphic fiction (he was coughing up Alan Moore dialogue just last week), but he also maintains a burning passion for all things wondrous. He is inordinately excited to be part of *The Spectatorial's* team, and hopes to help to shine a light on all the wonders our world's imagination has to offer.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

We are always looking for students to participate in the publication process of *The Spectatorial*! We strongly encourage interest from prospective blog writers, designers, illustrators, copy editors, and print issue writers. And every time you participate with us, you earn one contributors' point!

Contributors' points are how we keep track of how many times someone has contributed to *The Spectatorial*. They can be collected in many ways. Any instance of copy editing, designing, blogging, illustrating, or submitting is considered a point; you can help market us through postering; and, finally, you can attend our contributors' meetings, which occur once or twice per semester. Once you have two points you can apply to be on staff for the following year.

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